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285 Near this section lives a Negro basketmaker * who claims that he is carrying on the tradition of his ancestors. He [462] stated that for generations the men of his family had en- [322] gaged in wood carving, basket making, and various phases [286] of weaving, and that the craft had been passed on from father to son.[70] He himself only makes baskets. White oak [824] and bulrushes are selected as the material from which to make the baskets and they are stitched with scrub palmetto. A Those made of bulrushes are of the coil type (Plate IIc). A A kind of thin rope is made from this grass which is then twisted around and around and sewn tightly together. The baskets made from white oak are plaited.[70] The types of baskets include hampers, flat clothes baskets, farm and shopping baskets, and the popular "fanner" which the Negro venders balance gracefully on their heads as they walk about the city, displaying a colorful array of merchandise.

322 Some years ago an unusual discovery was made near this district when a boy noticed a carved spoon ** lying on top of 412 a rubbish heap. This spoon (Plate IIa), A which has been 532 carefully preserved, is made of teak, and, judging from the dark polished surface of the wood and its general appearance, it might well be more than a century old. The bowl is shallow and about two by three inches and the whole length about seven inches. The most unusual feature of the spoon is the carved figure of the disproportionate little man forming the handle. Of particular interest are the flat cranium, the exaggerated ears, the gash-like mouth, the queerly shaped nose, the long dangling arms, and the short tapering legs which appear to be far too small for the rest of the body.[41b]

• 794 Near the Old Fort is the Peace Mission of Father Divine.† 346 This comparatively new religious sect has an estimated mem-

* *John Haynes, 933 Wheaton Street.*
** *Property of Edward A. Sieg, 128 West Jones Street.*
† *Though the meetings of Father Divine are common to many parts of the United States, especially in the North, where white worshippers form a sizable proportion of the followers of Father Divine, this description ac-*

A, [See Categories 285 & 412, plate following p. xxxii-B--Analyst]

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794 346 bership of two million and a local membership of about fifty. There is nothing prepossessing about the small white building. The wooden floor is sprinkled with sawdust and except for the piano the only furniture is several roughly built wooden benches. The walls of the mission are hung with placards bearing inscriptions, of which the following are a few: "Peace—the Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink, but joy, peace and good will," "Peace and Good Will to the World," "Peace, Father Divine is God, Salutation is Peace."

794 At about eight o'clock in the evening members begin straggling in, two or three at a time. They are dressed soberly, with a noticeable lack of bright colors and ornamentation of any description, as one of the precepts of the cult is the sacrifice of all worldly possessions. Upon joining the church they must surrender everything of material value to Father Divine. The old life is a thing of the past. The convert must accept new habits, new names, and an entirely new scheme of existence.

794 793 The ardor of followers is not dampened by the fact that their leader has never been known to visit the Savannah branch. They claim that he is always present spiritually and can in this manner accomplish his miracles. At the (796) meeting a major part of the service is given over to a number of testimonials, presented by many of those present. One by one the converts intone their devotion to Father Divine* and vividly recount what he has done for them.

794 796 A stout Negro woman bearing the name of Sister Patience

curately portrays the House as it was found in this community. For this reason it was thought well to include it.

** Father Divine is said to have been born George Baker on a Hutchinson Island rice plantation near Savannah about sixty years ago. Sometime in the late 1890's it appears that he opened a meeting house in the Negro section of the Old Fort, calling himself "The Son of Righteousness." His activities in the community abruptly ceased when, after some trouble with the authorities, he fled from Savannah to escape a gang of whites who aimed to make him prove himself the reincarnation of Christ by walking on the Savannah River.*

Arriving in Baltimore, Maryland, he joined a religious sect headed by

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•794 796 Peace • gives the following testimonial: "Once it wuz muh highes ambition tuh know duh tings uh duh worl. I loved cahds an drink an udduh vices. No day passed wen I wuz not so drunk dat I would gib out an hab tuh go tuh bed. Now it is not so. I hab nebuh seen duh Fathuh in duh body, but I know dat he is God, fuh I hab made spiritual contac wid him. Because uh rightous libin I am now weighin two hundud pouns. Praise Fathuh."

A thin, wiry little Negro man, •• whose eyes gleam with a fanatical light, speaks next. He gives his name as Noah's Ark and states that Father Divine has given him the power to raise his wife from the dead and has caused him to enter upon a new and sanctified life. Faithful Patience, the wife, is also present and in turn testifies as to the truth of his statement and as to her own faith in Father Divine.

Triumphant Virgin, † happy in the knowledge that she is now leading a blameless existence, steps forward and gives the following statement: "I know Fathuh Divine tuh be God cuz he lifted me out uh duh guttuh and changed me frum a drunkud an all udduh low tings dat I use tuh be.

[793] *Father Jehovia. Later, in New York City the new disciple decided to open his own cult. It was then that he adopted his present name and that his converts created the maxim "Father Divine is God."*

Converts both white and Negro were eager to join the new order. Today Father Divine computes his followers as being between 21,000,000 and 30,000,000, although outsiders give a more conservative estimate. The leader travels extensively and "heavens" have been established in various parts of the country. His weekly income is reputed to be $20,000 and is derived from the many business establishments operated under his supervision.

He has a fondness for flashy clothing, wears a five dollar gold piece for a stickpin, and rides about in a pale blue Rolls Royce and a scarlet monoplane.

The self-styled Messiah has now extended his activities to the field of politics, both national and international. There is a variance of public sentiment concerning him. To followers he appears to be "reincarnated God," while enemies insist he is a fraud, a hypnotist, and a remarkably clever actor who is at present growing a little tired of the role he has chosen to enact.

Robert Allerton Parker, "The Incredible Messiah" (Boston, 1937), pp. 80, 93, 94, 106, 183, 188, 209–26.

• Sister Patience Peace, Old Fort.

•• Noah's Ark, Old Fort.

† Triumphant Virgin, Old Fort.

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Muh ole name is dead an now tings reign tru Fathuh Divine. Peace Thanks, Fathuh."

As the evening wears on, more of the devotees join in the chanting and in the spirited singing of the hymns. Demonstrations become more and more violent. Several of the congregation, caught in the throes of a powerful religious intoxication, begin to dance and sway with abandonment.[19] Others in the group encourage the dancers with a rhythmic clapping of hands and stamping of feet.

On and on the dancers whirl while the piano pounds out its accompaniment; above the din rises the wailed repetitious version of an improvised hymn. The participants in the dance seem oblivious to everything except the series of contortions in which they are indulging. Eyes half closed, fixed smiles on their faces, every muscle in their bodies aquiver, they stumble blindly on. Some bump into the wooden benches, others fall exhausted to the floor. Still the dance goes on.[46]

Over and over can be heard the hoarse chanting of the worshipers as they continue to give praise to Father Divine, the man who, according to their own account, was not born in the ordinary manner but was "combusted" one day in New York City and who was sent to earth to save his followers from destruction.

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Brownville

BROWNVILLE, MORE PROSPEROUS OF ASPECT THAN the Negro communities usually fringing business and industry, spreads westward along the edge of Savannah. Though on its Currytown boundary it, too, contains the inevitable shacks in lanes, several of its streets, paved and tree shaded, are lined with good frame and brick houses which are occupied by the more well-to-do Negroes, among them teachers, doctors, lawyers, and business men. A substantial school building and the Charity Hospital speak of advanced social consciousness.

On Bismark Street is found the House of Prayer, one of the many churches established throughout the country by Bishop Grace. Here several times each year the leader visits his congrégation, and the day on which "Daddy Grace" * [16] returns to his flock is always a gala occasion. Regular members and visitors from outlying districts crowd the heavy lumber benches of the House of Prayer. The air is tense with excitement. Above the confusion can be heard the strident but rhythmic beat of drums.[23] Bright splashes of color are given by the crepe paper decorations and the vividly contrasting military costumes of members of the church organizations, among which are the Lilies of the Valley, the Queens, the Royal Guards, the Silver Leaf Band, the Transportation Committee, Male Ushers No. 1, Male Ushers No. 2, and the Sons and Daughters of the Prophet. Others in the

* *Though the meetings of Bishop Grace are common to many parts of the United States, it was thought well to include an accurate description of the House of Prayer as it was found in this community.*

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794 (292) congregation don their newest and most colorful garments. Preparation has been made for all emergencies. In attendance are burly guards whose duty it is to see that nothing occurs to disturb the smooth performance of the ceremonies. The floor has been thickly sprinkled with sawdust and the stout posts at the front of the church are padded to prevent injury to overzealous worshipers.

794 793 796 At the sudden sharp sound of a whistle all activity ceases; there is silence in the church. The Armor Bearers leave the building to escort the Bishop to his seat of honor. Soon they return, followed by the Queen who is arrayed in a pale green satin evening dress over which is worn a black velvet cape lined with scarlet. A double line of uniformed guards follows, and marching proudly between the lines is the Bishop. According to his own statement, the Holy Prophet, as his followers call him, is of Portuguese birth. His long dark hair which falls to his shoulders, his piercing eyes, his pointed beard, and sideburns all combine to give him a distinguished and unusual appearance.*

The procession continues to the front of the church, where, with much ceremony, the Bishop seats himself upon a lofty throne set far back on the spacious platform. The

Details of the early life of "Daddy Grace" are clothed in obscurity and little can be learned of the real origin of the Houses of Prayer. Some claim that he is of West Indian birth, others that he was born Marcilino Manuel Garcia in Portugal, and still others interpret his references to " a land beyond the sea" as indication that he hails from Egypt. All members of the cult must be baptized and during a four-week session in 1936 1,789 candidates were ministered to at a charge of $1.00 each. The Bishop advocates that members give generously of their material goods to the church and he has been known on occasions to go about among his congregation seizing purses and demanding that worshipers sacrifice treasured jewelry. It is a well known fact that his profession of "spiritual leader" has proved a vastly profitable one, and in the course of the last several years he has amassed a huge fortune. Many of "Daddy's" enterprises are looked upon with disfavor and suspicion by the police department. His frequent clashes with the law over various matters of an extremely worldly nature serve only to increase the attendance and the collections at the church and also give the Bishop much desired publicity. Followers are unimpressed by his occasional arrests, secure in the knowledge that no earthly force can ever conquer "Daddy." See Time *(New York), March 7, 1938, XXXI, No. 10, p. 30.*

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Queen stands at the Bishop's right, facing the congregation. The music blares forth with renewed intensity and the entire multitude, led by the uniformed guard, passes in single file before the throne. As members approach the Bishop, they pledge themselves to him by removing their hats and bowing low. In the midst of all this commotion "Daddy" sits, a remote, detached figure, his downcast eyes seemingly indicating that he is scarcely aware of this carefully planned reception.

Between the musical numbers several of the congregation rise and loudly testify to the miracles that Bishop Grace [22] has performed in their behalf. A flourishing sale is conducted in consecrated handkerchiefs and copies of a newspaper published by the cult. These are believed to possess unusual healing powers.[8, 12] A ready market is also found for large pictures of the Bishop, for it is said that to chew up his likeness will cure many kinds of illness.

The grand march is spectacular. All those present assemble in the large center aisle. The band strikes up a lively measure and the procession starts. At the front of the church the line of march divides, half the people going down one side aisle, the other half going down the opposite one. At first the procession is orderly and fairly quiet, but as time passes, the music becomes increasingly loud. Above the brass instruments the steady throb of the drum can be heard. Voices are raised in accompaniment, feet stamp, shoulders sway, and hands clap.[19]

Around and around the procession winds. The singing and dancing become wilder and more abandoned. Many now close their eyes, dancing blindly and stumbling into those near them and into the benches and posts. By this time the music is almost deafening and the noise made by the worshipers is equally loud. The muscles of their bodies twitching convulsively, they continue in their dance.[46]

Occasionally one of the participants stops, and, regard-

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less of the hindrance to the rest of the worshipers, jumps up and down wildly, crying out in a shrill, hysterical voice. At length, exhausted, he sinks to the floor and is dragged by friends from under the whirling feet of the others.

One woman, seized by such a paroxysm, falls to her knees, screaming incoherently. Exhausted by her violent emotion, she lies on the rough board floor, her jaws hanging open loosely, her eyes closed. Slowly, she raises her hands and beats them together muttering, "Praise Daddy. Praise Daddy Grace."

The pulsating rhythm of the instruments increases in tempo. A man leaps high into the air, gesticulating and babbling; faster and faster he whirls, until he too falls from utter exhaustion. Still the wild display continues. The terrific nervous strain is taking its toll, and now all but a few of the dancers stumble wearily. The steady, insistent sound of the drum urges them on; feet still shuffle, hands beat out the rhythm, and voices chant an incoherent incantation.

Abruptly the band ceases and members straggle back to their places. Those who have fallen out from exhaustion are dragged to the benches by their friends.

The service continues. During the evening many collections are taken up. Two of the deacons, acting on behalf of the Bishop, urge the people to contribute freely. Their methods of approach present a strong contrast. One, stout, dark-skinned, and clad in a pearl gray suit, has a gentle and persuasive manner. He says softly to the congregation, "Precious Haht, hep us tuh raise fawty bucks fuh Daddy Grace right quick. Wile duh Prophet sits on duh throne befo us, let us all contribute freely tuh him."

The other deacon, short and wiry, darts about among the congregation. His manner of speaking is quick, and he barks his orders to first one and then another of the church members. "Step right up now," he advises. "Dohn hole back on us. Anybody else now, come right up an contribute.

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796 Ebrybody gib at leas one nickel now wile we still hab duh
• 794 privilege uh gibin tuh Daddy. Step up, ebrybody."

796 Until this point Bishop Grace, apparently indifferent, has
793 had no active part in the ceremony, but he now steps forward. There is a sudden hush.

"Daddy" becomes an intimate, vivid part of the group. Coming down among the congregation, he addresses his talk now to one individual, now to another, dropping frequently into the southern Negro dialect. The theme of his address is, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap." The main issue, however, is often sidetracked, and the speaker comments in turn upon world politics, the war, anecdotes of his own trips abroad, his persecution by enemies, all of whom "the Lord struck down dead," and the general condition of the local community. The entire discourse is interspersed with humorous sayings that find a delighted response. "Daddy" advises his followers strongly against trusting anyone. "If the angel from Heaven comes down an wants an extra pair of wings, don't trust him," he warns. "Tell him you ain't got no time to keep books today. He have to pay cash." Near the conclusion of his talk the Bishop says that he can accomplish anything he chooses, even to sinking ships, destroying fleets of planes, or conquering entire nations. He is not the actual power, he says, but he is so close to it that he has only to reach out his hand and pull the switch.

After every sentence or two that "Daddy" utters his listeners echo his statements with such remarks as "Ain't it so, Daddy," "Dat is duh trute," "Yes Daddy," "You tell em, Daddy," "Hallelujah," "Amen." These utterances do not always agree with what the speaker has just said but nevertheless are meant to express thorough approbation. At

[786] one time "Daddy" tosses to a woman in the congregation a rose he has used in illustrating a point in his sermon. This

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SANDFLY

791 In a section of Sandfly known as Baker's Crossing lives Ophelia Baker, better known as Madam Truth, professed fortune teller and clairvoyant. The woman's sober attire and her modern attractive house give little evidence of her profession. When holding a seance, however, her whole appearance undergoes a change; her body becomes tense and jerks spasmodically; her dark eyes roll wildly. Of her ability in her chosen field the medium says, "I advise on business an love affeahs. I tell good an bad nooz comin tuh yuh. Deah's a remedy fuh ebry trouble an I hab dat remedy, fuh a spirit hab brung it tuh me."[22a,•]

791 Madam Truth, a member of the Holy Sanctified Church of Sandfly, said that all members must undergo a sanctifying process in order to be saved. After this has been accomplished members claim to be able to hear, from a great distance, singing, talking, and the sounding of drums. We were told that the beating of the drums has a special significance, but that was all we could learn on the subject; we were told that this was a secret, divulged only to members.

794 Members of the church are forbidden to eat certain kinds of fish and also cabbage, lettuce, and other green vegetables. The reason they give is that they have received a warning from the spirits that it is unwise to eat these foods.[25]

791 The plump, dark-skinned fortune teller said that she had spent her childhood on Skidaway Island. She remembered hearing the drums beaten to tell the people in the nearby settlements of an approaching dance or festival. Her father had been one of those who beat the drum and thumped out a regular message on it, a message that could be heard for miles and was clearly understood by all those who had heard it.[26]

764 The woman also remembered wakes which had been held on Skidaway. Coffee and sandwiches were served the mourners, each one of whom poured some of the coffee on the ground for the spirit of the deceased.[27b,•]

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829 "Doze folks could fly too. Dey tell me deah's a lot ub um
789 wut wuz bring heah an dey ain much good. Duh massuh
567 wuz fixin tuh tie um up tuh whip um. Dey say, 'Massuh, yuh ain gwine lick me,' an wid dat dey runs down tuh duh ribbuh. Duh obuhseeuh he sho tought he ketch um wen dey git tuh duh ribbuh. But fo he could git tuh um, dey riz up in duh eah an fly way. Dey fly right back tuh Africa. I tink dat happen on Butler Ilun.

825 "I use tuh heah lots ub animal stories, but it bin so long I mos fuhgit bout um. I ain heah much bout duh spiduh cep he is bery wicked an he shahp. He kin spin he tread an riz right up in duh eah widout nuttn tuh hep um. He see a fly an begin tuh spin roun an roun um till he ketch um in he web. Den he caahn git way an An Nancy got um. Das wut duh chillun say tuh dis day wen dey see a spiduh ketch a fly —An Nancy got um.' " "

346 On Sunday evening Julius drove us through black swamp and bush to the church at Silver Bluff (Plate XVIII).[A] The little white frame building with yellow light from oil lamps shining through the windows made the night suddenly come
• 794 alive. Negro men and boys were moving about outside in the darkness and a few were gathered on the steps. All the women and children were inside.

Escorted by Julius and a deacon we went into the church and took our places on the second from the front middle bench. The pulpit stood on the raised platform on which most of the light was concentrated. The men and boys came in. The church was filled with a tense quietness.

793 The preacher came from behind the platform and stood
794 silently behind the pulpit desk, looking dramatically over his congregation. He was tall and spare, with brown skin, narrow face, and a thin pointed beard, a Mohammedan looking Negro. He wore a black skull cap, which we learned
(292) later was not ritualistic but was worn to protect his head

A, [See Category 346, plate following p. xxxii-X--Analyst]

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from the draught. This was Preacher Little who, we were afterwards told, was an itinerant preacher, not a native to the island but a type native to the district.

His text, read in a loud, commanding voice, was "You ah the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its savory, wherewith shall it be salt; it is then no good and should be trompled intuh earth." The exposition of this pronouncement was awaited with breathless interest.

The sermon that followed, however, was in no way connected with the text. Preacher Little divided his sermon into three parts and lectured his congregation on "straying frum duh paat." What he said was not really coherent. Words stood out, phrases rang in our ears, quotations from the Bible resounded at random but that was the beginning and the end. The impelling element was the sound of Preacher Little's voice.

In each part he began slowly, quietly, persuading and reasoning with his congregation. His voice would carry a pleading question to them and they would answer, "Huh."[29] As he progressed, the quiet reasoning diminished; he shouted to his listeners. The "Huh—Huh's" became loud, guttural, vibrating grunts that echoed through the little building. Regular stamping of the feet began; the vibration penetrated into every corner. It was impossible not to think of the beating of the drum. The regular rhythmic, swelling noise was deafening. It meant agreement with Preacher Little. It urged him on to greater heights until his shouting voice not only seemed to fill the church but to reverberate from wall to wall. This climax was reached three times, at the end of each of the three parts of the sermon. Each time it seemed to act as a great emotional purge to the listeners and leave them happily exhausted.

When the sermon ended, spirituals were sung under the able direction of a young Negro named George Smith.* The

* *George Smith, Sapelo Island and Brunswick.*

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be for that of an elderly person who had acquired many friends and relatives over the years.

The Sea Island churches are the mainstay of the community and are always full of life, vigor, and energy. Many of them have long and illustrious histories. The Hebrew United Presbyterian Church on Johns Island, for example, was organized in 1868 after the white Presbyterian church no longer admitted blacks to worship at its services or in its building. The blacks held services in a bush tent until a new building could be put together out of lumber left on Seabrook and Kiawah beaches by a shipwreck. At the time the island could be reached only by boat, and according to the church historian, the organizing members gathered the wood, put it on a raft, and floated it to the construction site.

Brick Church, located on St. Helena Island, is a Baptist church with an even longer history. It was constructed by slaves for their masters in 1855. In 1862 the slaves, who had been permitted to worship in the balcony, took over the church when the white masters fled the island during the Civil War. Before Penn School (the first normal industrial and agricultural school for the education of blacks in South Carolina) was erected in 1864, the school's founder, Laura Towne, held classes in this church. An elegant two-story structure, Brick Church has been standing firm and serene for more than a century on the grounds of what is now Penn School Center.[53]

The Sea Island church services are lively and enthusiastic. At a good Baptist or African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Sunday morning service, the singing and praising will be audible for many miles. If there is a pianist, drummer, guitarist, or tambourinist, the service is even more energetic. The musical instruments are secondary, however, to the congregation's expressions of joy through handclapping, handshaking, and general rocking and swaying. It is literally impossible to attend these services and not be moved to participate actively. Even the smallest child attempts to move in time to the beat of the songs. The rhythm is also a very important part of the sermons. The minister uses many rhetorical devices to involve his congregation in the service, chief of which is the repetition of words and phrases at the beginning and end of each statement (see Chapter 3). The parishioners are mesmerized by the flow, rhythm, and steady recurrence of the repetitions, and their responses keep the service alive and active.

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starts slowly and softly, gradually increasing in tempo while the shouters strive to keep up with it; it becomes louder and faster until they are totally spent.

The call-and-response style is still the tradition of worship in Sea Island churches, just as it is in most southern black churches. The minister calls out a statement, and the congregation repeats it or gives a rhythmic and raucous reply. Though many of the men act as responders to the ministers, few shout or become "happy" as many of the women do. However, those who do join in the movements of the shout do so with considerable zeal. These frenzied shouts are related to the practices of certain African religious cults.[55] In 1904 a woman wrote of her encounters with the spirituals and shouts of the Sea Islands and asked an inhabitant what explained them. The respondent replied that when the preacher read from the Bible how those "dry bones ter lib ergin," something deep within her would come to life and she would begin to holler and sing some old "shout" song from Africa.[56] I observed similar call-and-response services in Nigeria: though I could not always understand what was being said in the language of the service, I found that I could nevertheless join in singing the reply.

Today there are many customs and practices unique to the Sea Islands and ~~to parts of~~ Africa which offer investigators rich insights into African and African-American traditions. The Sea Island language and oral literature did not develop and survive apart from the social and cultural environment which produced them. The extended family household and the Sea Island burial customs, religious beliefs, and styles of worship are no less evidence of African roots and preservations than is the language itself. As long as these roots remain viable, the Sea Island people will maintain their cultural integrity; only when such traditional roots die will their culture die. I hope that an awareness of these influences upon the culture will aid in understanding the African influences upon the language and literature discussed in the following chapters.

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not only on the children but on the adults who often came to visit her as well. Many times the children sat with their eyes glued to her face or staring dazed into the fire, hypnotized by the slow, steady rhythm of her voice unfolding the bizarre events of her tale. At times, her voice became so low, and she paused so long, that some of the younger children stirred, and the older ones lashed out in anger at them for disturbing the chilling mood that had been created. In tales of hags, ghosts, and other strange happenings, the audience did not usually respond quickly as they did with other, less suspenseful, tales, primarily because topics such as these were not taken lightly by the islanders. Many are staunch believers in hags, ghosts, voodoo, and the occult. Thus tales of this kind were told not only for entertainment but to inform or to reaffirm the listeners' belief in the existence of these seen and unseen forces rampant throughout the islands and the universe.

Furthermore, such grave topics often had an aesthetic appeal somewhat different from that of funny or historical tales. The audience was not lively, loud, or as energetic as it would be when listening to the exploits of Ber Rabbit. Witty stories are deserving of spirited and excited responses. In listening to tales of the supernatural, the audience tended to be not only quiet but filled with awe and reverence, even more for one who knew of such things by firsthand experience than for the topic itself. There was some verbal interplay between Miss Deeley and her audience, but it was much more subdued than even in prayers and sermons. In prayers and sermons the audience is expected to participate openly in the event. People are free to speak as loud and become as verbally unrestrained as they want "when the spirit hits them." In listening to tales like Miss Deeley's, the audience was restrained both by the subject and by the speaker's use of a lowered, even whispered, tone to help create an eerie effect; many times the listeners had to strain to hear every word. As a result, most displays from the audience were in the form of low moans ("ummmm . . . uh") or an occasional "yeah, man," "shonuf so" or "where you de say you see em?" In these narratives—especially where a story was felt to have an actual basis in fact—the listeners' questions were not rhetorical, and the speaker took time out from the events of the tale to answer them.

Miss Deeley was one of the few informants who still included songs in some of the tales told. Songs are an inherent part of most West African stories, and of stories told throughout the Caribbean, because

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782 794 531 533

It has been suggested that some respondents in African-American congregations may not understand or actually accept what the speaker says but respond instead to the highly contagious cadence established by the call from the speaker and response from the audience.[4] This observation may be justified in part: one may not be stimulated to respond to the message in the prayer, but it is difficult if not impossible to ignore the rhythm with which the prayer is delivered. Without a doubt, however, some congregants listen carefully to every detail—not only to receive the message but because, seeing that the prayers are not written, potential prayer givers must be attentive in order to learn the art of the prayer tradition.

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Perpetuating this tradition is made easier by the formulaic element in their arrangement. They usually begin with a quotation from the Bible, a poem, or, more traditionally, some lines from the Lord's Prayer. The speaker usually has no prior knowledge that he will be asked to pray. Thus, the quotation gives him time to organize his thoughts and prepare himself to deliver an effective prayer. He is at liberty to alter a quotation to his own specification and often the alteration is more effective than the original. For example, the lines "For thine is the kingdom / The power and the glory" may be improved to "O Lord, that thine may be our kingdom / We expecting your kingdom to be / [a] poor sinner['s] glory!"

After the quotation, the speaker begins his personal prayer, a structured oration with a proem, line of appeal, and peroration. The proem opens with a rhetorical salutation to God commensurate with the solemnity of the occasion. It permits the speaker to express his humility as a servant of God, using such words as *mutable* and *impermanent*. The speaker does not presume to be as fortunate as the "foxes of the forest" or "the birds of the air." He projects himself as a mere waif asking for mercy with his knees bent in supplication:

(539)

Master Jesus, hear me
Another one of you[r] servant
Bow this evening, Jesus

Sin anguished and bended

. . . . . .

Crying to you this evening, Jesus
For Mercy

While mercy can reach [us]

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Gullahs worshiping in Goose Creek Church. (Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society, New York.)

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maintained by slaves' industry while the masters "live in the towns in opulency and ease" riding out to the "farms" once in a fortnight "as any urgent occasion requires, sometimes taking their ladies with them and children in chairs so that there is not the appearance of . . . business."[39]

The first census return for the new nation reported a population of 18,753 in Beaufort District (St. Helena, St. Luke, and Prince William Parishes). Of this number, 14,236 were slaves and 153 were free blacks. The resort town of Beaufort contained about thirty houses, and the majority of the population was scattered over the islands and on remote mainland plantations. Timothy Ford, a Northerner whose sister married into the DeSaussure family of South Carolina visited the region during that time. He commented on the absenteeism, the superfluity of servants, and the idleness of Southerners who called themselves planters, "yet know little about the process and art of planting . . . all is committed to overseers and drivers." Of religious life, Ford noted that the Episcopalian Church was the "preeminent and fashionable mode of worship," but also observed that:

> . . . the spirit had not lately visited this parish; the shattered and forlorn condition of this church gave but too much room to question their zeal; and the few that attended it (about fifty whites) to doubt the ardor of their devotion.[40]

A St. Helena planter's wife, Abigail Capers, wrote a friend in 1791 that there were about seventy families on the Island, forty of whom were eminent planters "with strong attachments to each other." The only church, she wrote, was a tiny Episcopal chapel of ease. Sundays were for the most part not spent in church but among "genteel company" on various plantations and engaged in a variety of "amusements." It was a simple but elegant life where "nothing is so much coveted as the pleasure of possessing many slaves . . . happiness is confined within the narrow limits of a plantation with a great many slaves."[41]

In the early nineteenth century Baptist churches were still tiny unpretentious houses of worship with no slave galleries, although personal servants did attend services. White memberships were so small that no specific seating arrangements were needed—blacks occupied the back of the churches and whites sat in the front. Furthermore, even though revivals were conducted in the Beaufort area in the early 1800s, church rolls indicate no significant gain in black membership. Not until 1817 did the Beaufort Baptist Church have its first extension to admit galleries

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and a tower, a first indication of a notable black membership at this Island church. In 1819, the Euhaw Church reported a membership of "18 Whites and 4 Colored," and the church at Black Swamp had thirty white and one hundred black members.[42]

Some slaves, during the "Second Great Awakening," beginning around 1800, were exposed to Christianity in Baptist churches. Often blacks were "converted" when no whites came forth. In 1800, Richard Furman of Charleston wrote to a Philadelphia Baptist minister of the success the new minister at Euhaw Church was experiencing. In nine months, "Mr Cook" had "baptized about twenty persons." Most of them "are Negroes."[43] This is a very small number, but nonetheless demonstrates that actual black membership does not tell the whole story. Obviously blacks were baptized in many instances without being given church membership. While this demonstrates black exposure to Christianity, it also illustrates the paucity of "Christian" instruction.

Even the religious revitalization that began in the North after the War of 1812 and spread to some parts of the South, was not greatly effective in the Carolina Lowcountry. In 1821, a long-term visitor from Connecticut living in Robertville wrote:

> The Religious state of things here it is hoped is improving. A few are enquiring "What they Shall do to be saved" . . . we who have been accustomed to having ministers settled in every village must feel the dearth of ministers in this part of our country where the toilers are ripe for the harvest and seem only to want Faithful Laborers in the vineyard. . . . The inhabitants of this place are all connected by inter-marriages, and I am afraid are very wordly minded and even the Professors appear to think more of the rise and fall of cotton than the rise and progress of religion.[44]

Although Baptists had no national association, local organizations exemplify how negligible black membership was in white churches. By 1806 there were 130 Baptist churches in South Carolina, most of which were in the upcountry. Communicants totaled 10,560, 3,500 of whom were reportedly black. Sixteen years later, according to the 1822 South Carolina Baptist Convention, the number of black Baptists had not greatly increased. The Baptist Church at Charleston had a black membership large enough to allow for separate meetings with "proper" regulations by 1819. It is questionable how many of the total black church membership was made up of slaves. In the case of the Charleston Baptist Church's black membership, the majority of the congregations were free. Yet an

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Even some time after 1831, general Baptist concern for the spiritual well-being of their slaves was limited. Only a small number of churches showed significant increases in church membership in about a ten-year period following the revival. This gradual progression itself was unique to older Sea Island churches. Leading Baptists stimulated to "duty" by the "revival spirit," and mindful of the currents affecting church and state nationally, attempted to generate more Christianizing activity through their influence in the Savannah River Baptist Association. In 1832 the Association formed a committee to seek funds from member churches to hire Baptist missionaries for the slaves. Since this effort was a slow process, the Association further recommended that ministers devote a certain part of their time exclusively to the slaves. The organization went on record as "feeling a deep interest for the spiritual improvement of our colored population, who have hitherto been neglected."[4]

The committee was composed of large slaveholders, many of whom were also deacons or pastors of the more prosperous churches at Beaufort, St. Helena, Black Swamp, Hilton Head, and Euhaw. These congregations had comparatively large black memberships, and the committee members were known for their "good works" in general and for the interest they took in converting their own slaves. But the resolutions expressed more of the committee's own sentiments and personal concern than a real plan of action. Baptist congregations were autonomous, and slaveholders in the Sea Island region resisted efforts of individuals in the denomination to create a Christian instruction movement. For a variety of reasons, Baptist efforts at slave conversion met with some success where it existed. But if measured in terms of church membership and frequency of exposure, such endeavors, were not extensive.[5]

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About a third of South Carolina's Baptist laymen and two-fifths of the ministers were slaveholders. Baptists in the Sea Island region, the most numerous sect since 1820, counted the wealthiest and largest slaveholders among its numbers. Consequently, antislavery sentiments were never expressed there despite early debates elsewhere in the South. On the contrary, the official opinion of South Carolina Baptists was expressed in 1822 following the Vesey Conspiracy, by Richard Furman of Charleston. "Slavery," wrote Furman, "was clearly established in the Holy Scriptures by both precept and example."[6]

Nevertheless, South Carolina Baptists confronted strong abolitionist sentiment from church members in other regions. As with Methodists, the controversy dominated national meetings in the 1830s. Abolitionists'

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rupted a church. He was often unsuccessful. The Savannah River Baptist Association consistently commented on the languid condition of the majority of churches in the 1830s. During the 1840s and 1850s the Association promoted Sabbath Schools-not only as a means of instructing slaves, but also to combat the "declension and prevailing coldness" as well as "lack of grace" in white churches. It is surprising that slaves ever received Christian instruction considering the circumstances of Baptist churches without "grace" or filled with "paranoia" about abolitionists. Yet some planters provided plantation meetinghouses for the slaves especially after 1845. Here African-Americans met among themselves under supervision of some "trusted" black elder. Through these "invisible institutions" slaves received some Christian instruction. More significantly, they used these opportunities to interpose their own interpretations on Protestantism. Nowhere was this development more evident than in the Sea Islands. Congregations there were far ahead of their sister churches in terms of wealth, stability, leadership, and an early though gradual commitment to ostensibly integrating Gullahs into the Christian religion.[15]

Two significant events occurred in the Sea Island region in 1831. First, the presence of Methodist missionaries among the slaves. Second, the appearance of a fiery revivalist named Daniel Baker. Both happenings were determining factors in initiating a "change of heart" among Sea Island Baptists about teaching some Christian doctrines to the Gullahs.

Baptist planters of the Sea Island region laid claim to a tradition of religious dissent that began long before American independence. Some Baptist founders in the region were early disciples of George Whitefield when the established church refused to admit him to the pulpit.[16] Prominent Beaufort District Baptists of the 1830s, such as the Fripps, Fullers, Lawtons, Chaplins, and Robertses, were descendants of pioneer homeseekers, and identified with a legacy of an evangelism older than American Methodism. Given such claims to revivalist tradition and considering the apostolic dictates of the Faith, Baptist planters may well have experienced some degree of guilt and embarrassment as Methodist "knights of the saddle bags" descended upon the Sea Islands to undertake what thier spiritual brethren had neglected.

Further pressure was brought to bear in 1831 and 1832 as Beaufort District quaked under the forceful impact of a revival initiated by a cultivated and spirited evangelist. Daniel Baker was a Southern Presbyte

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gious meeting and decided to attend, "confident of their ability to withstand all the preacher's snares." They attended Baker's meeting and found themselves "overcome" by a force stronger than they, and stripped "of the armour wherein they trusted." Before the revival ended, eight of the party of eleven "were found sitting at the feet of Jesus." One became a bishop, and another a presbyter of the Episcopal church.[19]

Word of the spiritual awakening in Beaufort District was carried to other parts of the state and even attracted coverage in national religious presses. The Methodist *Christian Advocate and Journal* printed an article illustrating the pitch of regeneration fervor aroused in Beaufort. The correspondent, one of those converted, stated that "no one can conceive who was not present," the effects of the revival on the resort town. Schools were closed, businesses, shops, and stores were shut—even politics were forgotten. The church was "filled to overflowing—seats, galleries, aisles, exhibited a dense mass of human beings from hoary age to childhood." Yet despite the multitude, "breathless silence" prevailed, broken only by the preacher's "reproving, persuading, imploring, thrilling" voice. Crowds reportedly came forward, and fell prostrate at the feet of the altar, as the musical voices of hundreds rose over the kneeling multitude. The scene was compelling, related the participant-observer, and "it was not in human hearts to resist the influence that awoke its sympathies, and spoke to its purest and most elevated feeling."[20]

Residents insisted that Baker was responsible for bringing new life to many Lowcountry churches. This rebirth was most visible in Beaufort. Citizens there claimed that even twenty years later there was a "a higher moral and religious tone, and a more intelligent and consistent profession of Christianity maintained."[21]

The Beaufort Baptist Church recorded a sizable white membership increase over a period of about ten years following Baker's appearance. And the augmentation of black members was unprecedented. According to membership lists, only 62 whites united with the church from 1804 (the year of its establishment) to 1831. From July 1831 to October 1840, 110 whites joined the congregation. Thus the majority of Beaufort Church's over 2,000 member increase from 1831 to 1840 consisted of black converts. Increases at other Beaufort District Baptist churches participating in the revival, though not as impressive, were nevertheless considerable compared to the majority of other churches in the Savannah River Baptist Association.[22] Thus, emerging zeal in some of the Baptist churches

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After Fuller left for Baltimore in 1847, attempts to bring slaves into Sea Island churches were not persued with the same enthusiasm. But in 1853, through efforts of the Savannah River Baptist Association missionary and an energetic new pastor at Beaufort Church named I.M.C. Beaker, Gullahs again became a focal point of concern. During the last seven antebellum years, slave baptisms in the Beaufort River again became frequent. A record was set in 1857 when 220 slaves received into the Church "were all on Sunday morning . . . Baptized by our Pastor . . . in 1 hour and 45 minutes and in the presence of a very large number of spectators." The total number of slaves baptized for that year was also a record—556.[27]

The first phase of Baptist efforts to Christianize slaves, from 1830 to 1845, roughly corresponds to a period of growth in Sea Island churches and, most spectacularly, the Beaufort Church. In 1833, Beaufort District had a slave population of around 30,861. For that year the nine largest Beaufort District Baptist congregations reported a total membership of around 4,419. That was over two and one-half times the total membership of the remaining twenty-eight Baptist churches in the Savannah River Association (whose combined memberships was only 1,666). We cannot be certain about the number of slaves these figures represent, since racial designations were not yet in use. But the majority of these church members were slaves, a hypothesis supported by membership returns of later years for which there are racial designations.[28]

By 1845, when the Southern Baptist Convention was organized, the largest Beaufort District Baptist churches at Beaufort, St. Helena, May River and Hilton Head for instance, reported a total membership of around 5,914. Most of this increase is attributable to slave baptisms and over half of those to Beaufort Church. Total membership for all forty-three churches within the Association was about 8,529. This trend indicates that the most active area of religious instruction was in the Sea Islands. St. Helena Parish, with a slave population of 6,740 in 1845, had two Baptist churches. While St. Helena's Brick Baptist Church was accessible to the several thousand slaves living there, Beaufort Church drew its membership for a forty-mile radius that included six Sea Islands and parts of the mainland. The adult slave population in Beaufort District was around 22,000 in 1840, out of a total slave population of 29,682.[29] Thus approximately one in every five slaves in Beaufort District was a Baptist church member.

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In the latter and generally most vigorous period of the movement for Christian instruction from 1845 to 1861, Baptist involvement continued to center in areas where evangelizing efforts were already in progress, such as the Sea Islands. Although several Lowcountry churches did increase their black membership during the period, such augmentation was numerically insignificant. Most membership returns submitted to the Savannah River Baptist Association had racial designations by 1848. These reports indicate that a few individual Sea Island churches maintained fairly large memberships and Beaufort Church had unusual increases. But the majority of Baptist churches in the Lowcountry south of Charleston seemed to fall short of the goal of religious conversion of bondspeople. Actually neither Sea Island Baptists, Baptist missionaries, nor lukewarm Baptist churches adequately "served the spiritual needs" of so large a black population. In 1859, as civil conflict approached, the total black membership of the Baptist churches within the jurisdiction of the Savannah River Baptist Association was not yet 7,000.[30] In some ways these figures are unimpressive, but they nevertheless demonstrate black exposure to Christianity through Baptist efforts. We can also surmise that black church members were the best conduits of the faith in the slave quarters. When this is considered, Baptist influence is even more manifest, for few Gullahs actually joined the Methodist church. Most Gullahs "converted to Christianity" or even adherents of it accepted the denomination of their masters, a preference that continued even after bondage. This raises questions about the nature of Baptist activity among the Gullahs, and why the denomination of slaveholders so strongly appealed to slaves.

Superficially, Lowcountry planters appear to represent "paternalism" par excellence. Those "young and refined" citizens of the Sea Island communities who claimed Daniel Baker for their spiritual patron included such men as C. C. Pinckney, William H. Barnwell, Robert Barnwell Rhett, Stephen Elliott, and Richard Fuller. These men represented the quintessence of South Carolina Lowcountry aristocracy, dominating landholdings and counting their slaves by the hundreds. Beaufort was the chief place of residence for most Baptist planters. But some of the stauncher Baptists such as the Lawtons, Robertses, Bosticks, and Nortons shunned "iniquitous" recreations offered by the Sea Island resort town and created their own manorial splendor at Robertville, Lawtonville, and Gillisonville. These planters reportedly excelled in erudition

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cern for religious instruction was mainly superficial. Possibly some wished to ease a sense of conscience aroused by the 1831 revival and to neutralize criticism from Northern quarters. But more significantly, Baptist interest in Christianizing the Gullahs was prominent where doctrine might be a means of exerting influence over personal behavior and social relationships to further the existing status quo.

"Christian" Slaves

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Mostly town slaves and house servants were first accepted into Baptist churches. Certainly, in the early phase of the movement, these African-Americans had access to the "privilege" of becoming church members. Since Beaufort was the chief place of residence for Sea Island planters, their retinue of house servants had the opportunity, and sometimes were forced to attend Baptist worship. As church membership increased, the next group of slaves in plantation hierarchy, the artisans, were also represented. Field workers were not completely excluded from the churches, especially Beaufort Church. When a slaveholder and his family joined a church, his slaves might be required to join as well. Richard Fuller, for instance, was diligent about accepting his slaves into Beaufort Church and encouraged this among his slaveholding neighbors. Yet few Sea Island Baptists allowed their field slaves the mobility needed to attend preaching places. This rule must have applied particularly to slaves wishing to attend church service in places like Beaufort or Bluffton that necessitated leaving the Islands or vicinity of the plantations for long periods of time and usually required some means of water transportation provided by the planter. Furthermore, these country churches were modest-sized structures, built mainly with the small white population in mind. Not all churches even had galleries. Among those that did, once the more "privileged" slaves and house servants were seated, there was obviously no room for the field hands. According to one former Beaufort slave:

> Didn't have no colored churches. De drivers and de overseers, de house-servants, de bricklayers and folks like dat'd go to de white folk's church. But not de field hands. Why dey couldn't have all got in de church. My marsa had threę or four hundred slaves, himself. And most of the other white folks had just as many and more.

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Even with favored slaves, concepts of white spiritual egalitarianism did not go far. Beaufort whites insisted in 1841 that the inside stairs leading

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to the slave galleries be moved to the outside so that the two races would not have to pass each other, or use the same entrance when they met to worship God in common.[37] One can thus imagine the disdain that "gentle" white folk felt at being in close quarters with field slaves.

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Some whites considered it a dangerous practice to allow slaves to leave plantations to attend church no matter what their status. Thomas Fuller, Episcopalian brother of the venerable Richard, reported on the state of religious instruction at the Charleston Meeting. Fuller complained that the habit of black church members descending upon the town of Beaufort was deplorable:

> Removed as so large a number are, every Sunday from the control and discipline of the plantation, and impossible as it is for the Church to know and control their conduct, they use their liberty in ways and for purposes adverse to their morals. Nothing seems to me more essential in order to their becoming a religious people, than that they be subjected to the supervision of the plantation, of the minister of a Church, that will investigate and correct their wrong views and bad habits. . . . It is owing, I think, to the want of religious instruction and discipline on the plantations, that the influence of religious instruction and the spirit of subordination among the negroes is so little seen and felt.[38]

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Baptist planters themselves recognized and attempted to confront these problems. As church memberships increased, a means of superintending the widespread congregation and keeping slaves on the plantations was needed. Black church members were organized into plantation associations under the jurisdiction of the church.

These "black societies" were the nucleus of the Gullah socioreligious community. They existed even before preaching stations were established and were reportedly religious bodies which slaves entered into voluntarily, although the nature and origin of these societies was unknown. Methodist missionaries found them already organized and a hindrance to Methodist authority among the slaves, especially when their practices were under the rubric of Christianity. In 1833, John Field, a St. Helena planter, wrote to the Methodist missionary assigned to the island. Speaking for himself and "others," Field expressed his disapproval of the societies, and of the slaves' association with the Baptist Church on St. Helena. According to Field, the slaves who joined the church were "almost entirely under the control of Negro leaders." The Methodist missionary's preaching on the island prompted "constant ap-

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plication" of slaves for "tickets to get baptized," and join the Baptist Church. The slaves derived no Christian benefit from their association with the church, said Field, but used it as "a place of resort." Field "suspected an influence decidedly contrary to vital godliness," but added that it could not be prevented "unless I resided on the place myself."[39]

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If the benne seed ritual is an example,[40] these societies had some characteristics similar to African associations. It is later argued that the black societies were, like the African societies, units of organization that regulated conduct and served to integrate individuals into the plantation community. Within these societies Gullahs practiced their own version of Christianity, and created their religious folk-culture. Baptist planters apparently intended to alter the "corrupt" elements within these slave associations and use them to promote a Christianity, suitable to their own ends. Slaves' familiarity with concepts of secret society, membership, and social regulations suggest a relationship to African institutions that Christian ideas of a community of believers reinforced. Like the formation of Gullah language, the syncretic evolution of African Christianity was a gradual process. It began when diverse African groups framed a spiritual commonality and belief system into which Christianity, at various times and with varied intensity, was incorporated, reformulated and appropriated. For many years, Gullahs heard of "Christianity" mainly from black rather than white teachers, and this contributed to the persistence of African norms, thought, and ceremony. But, as the benne seed ritual suggests, the presence of black "Christians" in the slave quarters undoubtedly produced debates, challenges, acknowledgments and selective adaptation even before 1830.

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While Methodist missionaries were "suspicious" of the black societies, for Baptists they were a medium for religious service and discipline among the slaves. Thus the black societies served one function for slaves and embodied another for slave owners. At Beaufort and other churches, slaves professing conversion as Baptists had to unite with a society. Beaufort Church, with its large black membership and extensive records, illustrates how whites expected these societies to function. At first black leaders had charge of the societies, but subject to the superintendence of a resident planter. The black leaders reported at the monthly church meeting. According to the Minutes of Beaufort Church for November 11, 1840:

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The Committee on discipline are requested to obtain if possible the presence of all the colored elders, at their meetings; as from them and them alone [the elders] must they expect to receive legitimate reports, of Deaths, the prosperity of their societies or backsliding members.[41]

When societies first came under jurisdiction of the Church each one bore the name of their black leader in charge. But by 1850 societies were under governance of a white brother living on the island and the organizations named after their locations. Rather than attend the white church, the black membership was directly affiliated with black societies for purposes of "religious instruction and worship."[42] Thus, black societies were the vehicle through which the Gullahs as Baptists participated in the Christian experience.

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Although white brethren ultimately were ostensible leaders of black societies, the structure and supervision of the organizations still provided the slaves with some autonomy. Ideally the white brother in charge of a given society held monthly meetings with society members, scrutinized the slaves' activities, conducted religious exercises, and examined candidates for church membership. Each white brethren was assisted by one or more blacks (depending upon the size of the society) called "watchmen," "elders," or "deacons," appointed by the church at the suggestion of the "brother in charge." In reality, however, the black deacon continued to direct the society. He was responsible for "general watchcare" over the society, and conducted society meetings "to inquire into and report . . . cases for discipline that may come to his attention." He was also at liberty "to hold meetings for worship and exhortation . . . on such plantations as he may have received special permission," and to administer communion. The black elder was in turn aided by "help" on each plantation with a sufficient number of society members. The help supervised members on the plantation, held prayer meetings, and reported weekly to the elder, naming those slaves desiring to join the society. According to a former Sea Island slave, a black exhorter would preach "to de field hands down in de quarters. . . . Meet next day to de Marsa's and turn in de report, how many pray, how many ready for baptism and all like dat."[43]

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Gullahs had a measure of control in terms of internal structure and worship within black societies. How they transferred that into community cohesion is discussed later. Planters primarily wanted plantation discipline preached, breaches of discipline punished, and corrective retri-

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bution administered in the name of Christian commandments. Beyond that superintendence, slaveholders spent little energy on Christian doctrine. Planters probably welcomed opportunities to provide slaves with a "safe" outlet for releasing pent-up hostilities and emotions. After 1845, many plantations had rude structures where the Gullahs could "hold prays" on weekday evenings as well as Sundays. Northern missionaries were appalled at the condition of the "Prays" or Praise Houses. "The owner furnished a better stable for his horses than a house of worship for these sons and daughters of the King of Kings," wrote Mansfield French from Port Royal.[44] Yet for Gullahs the Praise House was a plantation community hall where they related secular experiences, directed their religious life, openly expressed among each other their innermost frustrations, longings and expectations.

The white brother in charge of a society was generally a large slaveholder sometimes with several plantations on the Island he superintended. In other cases a Baptist overseer, but slaveholder in his own right, was assigned to a society. The names of Fripp, Chaplin, Barnwell, Baynard, and Fuller dominate Beaufort Church Minutes as "brethren in charge" of black societies. Most of these planters rarely spent long periods of time on their island plantations, preferring the comforts of their Beaufort townhouses. Most knew little about their slaves' activities (except house slaves) unless some depredation was committed and reported. In the early period of church superintendence of societies, white brethren were lax about meeting with the organizations, often leaving this responsibility with the black elders. In 1842 the Beaufort Church Business reminded white brethren of their duties:

> Resolved . . . that *Brother Chaplin be requested to attend himself in person as the Church deems it important that the Brethren appointed and responsible be themselves instructors of the societies confided to them.*

The Church had difficulty retaining a white brother in charge and resignations were frequent. Most Baptists apparently did not want the responsibility of overseeing black church members.[45]

Thus, black societies primarily accommodated the slave membership of large Baptist churches with little or no Christian instruction being imparted by white society leaders. The other sources of exposure to white Christian teachings came from Methodist missionaries, from preaching places established by Richard Fuller (though supplied less rigorously after

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he left), and late-coming Baptist missionaries who brought the last surge of slave baptismal activity in the mid-1850s. Apparently little screening occurred prior to uniting with Baptist churches, except examinations imposed upon the slaves by black leadership. Slaves were accepted into the Church from the societies, and admission was based on a profession of faith, evidence of "good character" from the slavemaster, and recommendation from the white brother in charge, who relied on intelligence received from the black elder.[46]

This lack of a meaningful conviction to teach Christianity raises the question of why some slaveholding Baptists accepted such large numbers of slaves into the churches at all. Neither a revival spirit nor Northern agitation fully explain the motivation. But activities of the Church Committee on Discipline perhaps express the manner in which Baptists expected Christianity to best serve them as slaveholders. Their change in attitude reflected the general shift away from paranoia about Christianizing slaves. After 1845 many believed that practical Christianity could work for the slave system. And although the majority of Gullahs had little or no contact with the Baptist church itself, church members felt the restraining arm of the faith through the Committee on Discipline.

Church discipline is an old concept, dating as far back as the sixteenth century. Early Baptist discipline was similar to the English Separatists' 1696 "Confessions of Faith," and integral to views of Christian fellowship for believers. This spiritual and communal sense revolved around creating a "true and orderly gospel church," with members conducting personal behavior according to Old Testament biblical tenants. Later, London Baptists' "Confessions of Faith" reflected concern for "order and discipline," and this was emphasized by their American counterpart, the Philadelphia Baptist Association, when in 1742 they composed their confessions and annexed a particular discipline code to it. In 1769 the Charleston Baptist Association adopted the Philadelphia model. Not all, probably not most, American Baptist churches had explicit discipline references in their confessions although discipline was a reality in the churches. But Charleston Baptists and their Lowcountry congregational extensions were products of the Calvinist-Baptist tradition as is reflected in their patent emphasis on discipline, and in other ways previously discussed.[47]

Nineteenth-century Southern and frontier evangelical congregations fostered a sense of community through worship, revivals, camp meet-

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ings, prayer meetings, and discipline. Church discipline kept alive the "heavenly pattern" which each church personified. This "city set on a hill" meted out censure and excommunication regularly to offending members who paled its self-image of purity and piety. As the country expanded, church discipline was used to control the raw excesses of new communities struggling against such "immoralities" as "drinking, fornication, gambling, dueling and profanity." Evangelical churches grew increasingly more powerful and espoused an increasingly conservative theology in the South and perhaps elsewhere. This trend toward religious conservatism was tied, though not exclusively, to political and social developments in the South, most notably to slavery. An obvious manifestation of this was the national polarization of church denominations.[48] In the Lowcountry, another significant and more immediate expression of efforts to protect the existing social and political order through religion is found in the function of discipline committees on plantations. Every Lowcountry church examined for this study with a large black membership had such a committee. The nature of this committee's concern with the slaves' activities reveals how Baptists intended to make Gullahs "good Christians" mainly insofar as Christianity made them better slaves. The work of the Committee on Discipline in the largest Sea Island church amplifies this thesis.

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Once attention focused on slave conversion, the most pressing church business was discipline of slave members. The Committee existed previously, but was reorganized and restructured in 1840, and its function broadened. According to the Minutes, the disciplinary body governed behavior of all church members, "both bond and free," but was specifically charged with looking into breaches of conduct committed by bondspeople. This committee of eight brethren investigated a few white cases, mostly involving social lapses. But in the "inquiry and investigation" of slaves, the "Committee on Discipline" had "broad" but "conservative powers."[49]

As with white "brethren in charge" of black societies, prominent Sea Island slaveholders, such as Benjamin Chaplin, Saxby Chaplin, William Fuller, James Fripp, and Edward Fripp dominated discipline of the Gullahs. Furthermore, members of the Discipline Committee might also double as superintendents of a black society. Sea Island planter Benjamin Chaplin, for example, was a member of the disciplinary body and also superintendent of the Beaufort Society. Noted for cruelty to his

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slaves and intemperance, even Chaplin's peers admitted that his "violent temper" which was "so entirely ungovernable," disqualified him as a religious teacher.[50]

Discipline Committees met once a month. Prior to 1845 black elders met at the church with the Committee and reported on the state of religion in their societies. Later, this procedure was discontinued. Instead, white brethern in charge of a given society met with black members one Sunday in the month and subsequently reported to the Discipline Committee, providing a list of recommendations for action. The responsibilities of the brother in charge were elaborated in the Minutes of Beaufort Church. Should any "private or personal offense be reported," he could take such action as "he may think proper." If the offense was of a "more serious character, involving immorality," it was the duty of the brother in charge to carefully investigate "the facts," report these to the church at its regular discipline meeting, and offer his recommendations. The white brother was also "authorized and expected to examine applicants for restoration" of their membership, "and if satisfied," to recommend action to the church.[51]

Thus only the "more serious" offenses got to the church discipline level, and all manner of "lapses in moral conduct" and plantation "crimes" were considered serious enough to warrant censure by the church. Slaves were suspended and excommunicated as often for "crimes" against plantation authority as for "moral" breaches. Frequently mentioned were offences such as "killing beef," "hog stealing," "barn burning" and simply "theft." Additionally, flight appeared consistently as a reason for excommunication. In 1841 for instance, bondswoman Betty was "suspended for running away," and the same action was taken against Tom for "harboring above Betty." Other reasons for excommunication were "impudence," "Sabbath breaking," "fornication" and "adultery." Occasionally slaves requested "permission to marry."[52]

The word of plantation authority subjected a slave to church discipline. As in a white court of law, a bondsperson's word was worth nothing in a white church. Monthly society discipline meetings were public. They were meant to dishonor and humiliate the slaves before each other, to admonish others against "wrong doing," and to prostrate the "guilty" before "church" law. The Gullahs were confronted with their "sins" by their earthy masters as they would face a "heavenly father" in the future. Interests of both "masters" were represented as the same so a crime against

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a slaveholder was a "sin" in the eyes of God. This outlook was pressed on children who, after 1845, sometimes received instruction on Sunday mornings in the form of oral catechism, recitation of the Ten Commandments, and prayers. Rebecca Grant recalled that in Beaufort her former owners "wouldn't miss de catechism," and they [the children], "was taught they must be faithful to the Missus and Marsa's work like you would to your heavenly Father's work." Slaves on St. Helena Island discussed "Good Billy" (William) Fripp, a Baptist master who was referred to as "good," not because of his benevolence toward his slaves, but for his avowed piety and strict sense of biblical discipline. According to the Gullahs this "leading Baptist" carried his Bible out to the fields, showed slaves "Moses' law," and then flogged them "accordin'."[53]

Baptist slaveholders applied selected scriptures to the Gullahs' daily life struggle. Planters hoped a general spirit of contrition, via a "fear of God," would prevail in the slave quarters and subvert independent thought and action. They viewed discipline meetings as having a purgative effect on the Gullahs and defeating their efforts to resist the most degrading aspects of bondage. Double jeopardy existed for these black church members. If discovered committing acts against slaveholding interests, they suffered bodily punishment. But worse perhaps was expulsion from black society, the Gullahs' primary source for freedom of expression. An excommunicated or suspended church member would receive no pass to attend a preaching place or "society" or be allowed to "hold prays." Slaveholders tried using Christianity to exercise psychological dominance over the minds of Gullahs as they employed brute force to maintain physical control. No other spiritual activity detracted from or competed with these religious tribunals. When they occurred, plantation authority insisted on the slaves' undivided attention. From the Beaufort Church Minutes we find that even the Methodist missionary's limited activities had to revolve around these assemblages:

> The Pastor to write to the Rev. Mr. Moore [Methodist Missionary] and request him to appoint any other Sabbath than the first in the month to preach on Ladies Island—as that is the day appointed for the discipline of that Society attached to this Church.[54]

White Baptists' use of church discipline to undermine the Gullahs' active indignation and struggle against bondage is evident when considering the nature of the "sins" of which black church members were found

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"guilty." Theft, for instance, brought many Gullahs before disciplinary tribunals. Of course slaves did steal for consumptive purposes, obviously because provisions were often insufficient and monotonous. To keep cotton at maximum yield, planters sacrificed cultivation of food staples for their workers. Provision acreage was not determined by the slave community's size, but by the numbers of food-acres workers could attend while working cotton. Sam Mitchell, a former bondsman on one of John Chaplin's Ladies Island plantations, considered his master one of the more tolerable slaveholders. Yet Mitchell recalled that slaves received only a weekly peck of corn except at potato-digging time when they also received potatoes. Sam Polite, of John Fripp's plantation on St. Helena Island, also remembered a grim picture of subsistence:

> On Sattiday night every slabe dat wuks gits peck of corn and pea, and sometimes meat and clabber. You nebber see any sugar, neider coffee in slabery. You has straw in your mattress but dey gib you blanket. Ebery year in Christmas month you gits fur or eider fibe yaa'd cloth. . . . You wears hit winter en summer, Sunday en ebery day. You don't git no coat.[55]

Understandably, Gullahs felt no particular bond toward a "Thou shalt not steal" edict despite supposed spiritual and assured physical reprisals. Certainly the Gullahs realized the sham of such dictates given their peculiar circumstances and oppression. Still Gullahs were not immoral on the subject of theft. Among themselves they took a serious attitude toward theft, considering it a breach of trust. Yet Gullahs felt no compunction about such acts directed toward the slave system. In the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission Interviews, conducted in 1863, Robert Smalls and Harry McMillan, two soldiers, Sea Island residents and former bondsmen, explained the slaves' attitude toward theft. They testified that while the majority of Gullahs stole from their masters and deceived them, these slaves would not steal from each other and were truthful in their dealings with one another. During the Civil War a white officer of the First South Carolina Volunteers told Charlotte Forten, a black Northerner, that he never saw a regiment where men were so honest. "In many camps the colonel and the rest of us would find it necessary to place a guard before our tents. We never do it here," he said. "They are left entirely unguarded. Yet nothing has ever been touched." Similarly, Laura M. Towne wrote in her diary: "The men and women come crowding here at all times begging to be allowed to buy clothing,

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and though they stand about for hours in the sun, we have never missed the slightest thing."[56]

In the benne seed ritual, Gullahs dealt with theft in a spiritual context, under the guise of the Baptist faith. But the moral judgment was the opposite of Christianity. "Sin" was not upon the slave who stole from the master, but the individual who "divulged" the act. Gullahs possessed a keen sense of communal morality which, in this regard, was not subverted by dogmatic features of Christianity. While stealing from "Maussa," was a sin, it was wrong—that is, against elements of collective interests and values—to steal from a fellow slave and hence betray community confidence. Gullahs extended their moral philosophy further than race or condition however, by refusing to steal from whites simply because they were white. But, the Gullahs were not naive. Their shrewd analysis of justice helped them distinguish between friend and oppressor even among white Northern "missionaries." And some white Northern Baptist ministers sent to the Sea Islands during the Port Royal experiment were more avaricious than cotton agents. One Reverend Phillips, on full salary from a missionary organization, also drew a salary from the government as a superintendant of plantations, and was provided with "house-rent and rations." Still, Phillips "demanded," from St. Helena Island Gullahs, "half-a-dollar from every church member for the half year ending January 1." Since some one thousand blacks on St. Helena, claimed membership in Brick Baptist Church, Phillips expected to collect quite a sum. But the Gullahs refused to pay. Other ministers "of like kidney" were dismissed for "lying" and for "stealing" contributions sent to the Gullahs by Northern congregations. On one occasion, Gullahs discovered that James McCrea, a minister representing the American Missionary Association was cheating them. They refused to attend McCrea's religious meetings and refused to labor in the cotton fields he supervised. Likewise, when some government cotton agents on St. Helena charged over 100 percent more for store items than was being charged in Beaufort, these stores were broken into "and robbed of a good deal of clothing."[57]

Flight, another problem continually plaguing Sea Island slaveholders and punished by both church and state, was usually provoked by some extreme act of cruelty, or gross injustice. Sometimes slaves left because of a strong desire to visit a loved one. Gullahs rarely ran away with intentions of "going North" for instance. Aside from the near impossi-

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middle of a sandy cotton field, with cabins on each side in a row." The first building on the street was the Praise House, a paintless, cheerless-appearing building of boards that "looked as if a heavy gale might lay it low." Some antebellum Praise Houses were equipped with a bell (not to be confused with the driver's horn). Several nights during the week, as well as on Sundays, its welcoming, soothing sound brought the people on "the street" together for assembly. The following description, although a post-Civil War one, could easily fit the antebellum scene:

> . . . soon dark figures moved along those countless little footpaths that intersect the plantation in all directions.
>
> The Praise House filled slowly. It was a small one-roomed cabin that looked weirdly alive as you approached it through the darkness. The numerous cracks in roof and walls gave the outlines of the building sketched in streaks of light against the background of the night.
>
> The room was filled with rough backless benches, and at one end was a little table for the leader. Behind this stood a long bench where several men, officers of the Praise House sat facing the people in motionless silence with half-closed eyes and bowed heads.[1]

Most planters erected these meetinghouses after 1840 to afford the slaves a place for worship and to deprive the inhabitants of various plantations of an opportunity to mingle. Yet the Praise House also offered Gullahs a means to free expression. It was not only a place for religious gathering and spiritual solace but was essential to their community structure. At the Praise House, among fellow slaves, Gullahs publicly professed what they considered a satisfactory spiritual experience, as it was necessary to obtain approval from the Praise House congregation before petitioning the master and the Baptist church for membership. If the religious experience was not inspiring enough, or if the elders and the membership doubted the candidate's sincerity, the individual was not recommended for baptism.[2]

In addition to being a means of bringing conformity and spiritual harmony to the slave quarters, the Praise House was very much like a town hall where members of the plantation gathered, using prayer, song, and exhortation to comfort each other. J. Miller McKim, a Northern observer very much interested in Gullah music, wrote in 1862:

> I asked one of these blacks . . . (Prince Rivers, Sergeant, 1st Reg. S.C.V.)—where they got these songs. "Dey make 'em, sah." "How do they make them?" After a pause, evidently casting about for an explanation, he said: "I'll tell you,

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it's dis way. My master call me up, and order me a short peck of corn and a hundred lash. My friends see it, and is sorry for me. When dey come to de praise-meeting dat night dey sing about it."[3]

The slaves' loyalty was to the Praise House rather than to the Baptist church few of them ever attended. Even during Northern occupation and after the Civil War, Gullahs continued to gather at the Praise House whenever trouble befell their community. Despite the fact that white Baptist churches were almost completely under black control during the war (in terms of both structure and organization), the source of power on the plantations was still the Praise House. And after the war, Gullahs continued to see it as the center of group life and to conduct themselves according to Praise House customs and regulations.[4]

Since the Praise House congregation consisted of families who knew, through daily contact, the personal life of a candidate, it was possible to scrutinize behavior and to ostracize an individual, not so much on purely religious grounds as for breaches of trust within the quarters. Elders and members exerted great disciplinary power over plantation hands, having the right to "turn dem outen de Pray's House if dey ain't fur walk right." Hence, while the Gullahs probably attached little significance to church disciplinary measures instituted by the master, but which they, as Praise House members, were forced to implement, a crime against one of their own was a different matter. Long after slavery, the Praise House continued effectively to hold its members responsible for good behavior, and the influence of these small units of the church has long been credited for the fact that crimes were rarely committed among Gullahs. In the 1920s the Beaufort sheriff stated that the Praise Houses kept Gullahs law-abiding even as freedpeople, "because the Negro fears the Lord more than he fears the law." Yet it was not "fear" so much as a desire for harmony and a sense of love and respect for each other that allowed Gullahs to maintain integrity in the community. The significance of Praise House loyalty and community membership as a social regulating force has been observed by researchers as late as the 1970s.[5] Existence of these plantation meetinghouses conformed to the desires of slaveholders, but they also served to strengthen bonds of kinship and a sense of commonwealth among the Gullahs.

Gullahs often expressed time in terms of before or after they "had sense." The concept puzzled Northern teachers who worked among them during the Civil War. "Catching sense," as the Gullahs called it, a term still used today on some Sea Islands, refers to the time when a person

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completes the process of joining the Church and Praise House. According to Patricia Guthrie who did field work in the Sea Islands, "entrance into the religious and the politico-jural domains parallels the time when plantation membership becomes fully realized," or when a person "catches sense." Joining the Praise House formally expressed this initiation into the plantation domain. An individual was no longer merely a member of a household but a citizen of the plantation community, and a member of the Church. Thus personhood was attained through "catching sense." All members had to answer to the religious court system when discord arose. The Praise House law was considered the "just law," and when disputes arose, settlement was reached in the religious court. Praise House membership demanded that all grievances go before this "Committee." The "unjust law" was essentially white law.[6] This raises questions about how plantation membership functioned before widespread Christian teaching by whites, and before freedom. The benne seed ritual indicates that before Methodist missionaries came, plantation depredations against the master did not warrant censure in the slave quarters. It is doubtful that this changed even after slaves "accepted" white Christianity. Internal association among any group is more significant than outside forces, especially if the outside element is an oppressive one. Also, community leaders did not go about seeking wrongdoers. Instead, cases were reported by other church members or by individuals involved in the grievance. Obviously a case brought to the leader's attention by the planter had to be acted upon. But the Gullahs did not view plantation "discipline" from the master's perspective, or as "just law."

The religious court heard both sides of a dispute and encouraged the parties to reach an agreement without input from the Praise House leader or other church members. Usually cases were settled at the first level. If not, the case went to the leader and then to the membership. The religious court system was respected and taken seriously. The small amount of crimes after slavery indicate that few Gullahs came before it and few wanted to be censored for misconduct. The ultimate aim of the religious court was to maintain "peace and harmony" in the community. The Gullahs believed this was best accomplished by settling disputes within the group. There was strong disapproval of anyone who went to the master or, after slavery, to the secular authorities. Such a person did not want a settlement, but to merely create more trouble for the group.[7]

The same attachment to religion and community membership that existed among West Africans was observed among the Gullahs. At the

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time of the Civil War, over half of the adult population of the Sea Islands were church members. Many others were baptized during the Northern occupation, some stating that "they had desired for years to join the church, but could not get leave from their masters." Francis Kemble noted that on the Butler estate on St. Simon's Island, slaves were forbidden to go to church and ministers were not allowed on the plantation. Yet some slaves were willing to endure corporal punishment and were baptized without approval. An American Missionary Association minister observed in 1863 that "the colored people think a good deal of belonging somewhere. This is alright but I fear many of them have been taught to think that joining church was the principal thing." Arthur Sumner recorded an incident that gives insight into the Gullahs propensity to equate communal and secular concerns. The following conversation occurred between Sumner and his housekeeper Patience:

> "How many children you got, Misser Sumner," said she.
> "Not one, thank the Lord."
> "No Chillun?"
> "I'm not married."
> In sheer amazement she sat down and stared at me as little boys do at the museum.
> "Oh, you'r joking."
> "Fact."
> Then she rolled over, and laughed till she was sore.
> "Not married! Why," said she, "you look settled!"
> She went off, finally, muttering to herself. . . . The next morning she returned to the charge.
> "You a member sure."
> "Eh?"
> "A member, a church member."
> "Neither married nor a member," I replied with solemn voice. She almost dropped my breakfast. She has been trying I see, to comprehend this double phenomenon; but she makes bad work of it. Sometimes I find her looking at me with wonder and commiseration; and if I ask her what she is thinking about she avoids a direct answer.[8]

Sumner's was a kind of individualism which Patience apparently could not fully comprehend. No wife, no children, no membership meant alienation—no place in the community. Gullah religion was not only a contract between God and the individual. It was a mutual agreement among themselves which implied that they could not love God without loving each other. While their common oppression bound them together in one sense, the Gullahs' decision to see themselves as contracting with

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each other to live as "one body" also allowed them to operate collectively and ward off the demoralizing effects of exploitation. A central element in their religious attitude was a sense of individual honor. Love for their fellows, and a respectful disposition would find favor with God. This orientation was often expressed in terms of "manners." "A Christian is mannerable," the Gullahs were fond of saying. One Gullah soldier, in his supplications to heaven, implored, "Let me lib so dat when I die I shall *hab* manners." Northern teacher Harriet Ware described an old Gullah woman, Widow Bedotte, who had been driven insane by watching her master whip her daughter to death; "very sad it is to hear her talk," wrote Ware. Yet, although Widow Bedotte's epithets against her master and the rebels were voluble and denunciatory, "she prides herself upon her good manners, which she says she gets because she belongs to the church, which every now and then she joins again." Charlotte Forten observed the Gullahs' attitude toward each other:

> These people are exceedingly polite in their manner towards each other, each new arrival bowing, scraping his feet and shaking hands with the others, while there are constant greetings such as, "Huddy? How's yer lady?" ("howd' ye do? How's your wife?") The hand-shaking is performed with the greatest possible solemnity. There is never the faintest shadow of a smile on anybody's face during this performance. The children, too are taught to be very polite to their elders, and it is the rarest thing to hear a disrespectful word from a child to his parent, or to any grown person. They have really what the New-Englanders call "beautiful manners."[9]

Despite enslavement and poverty, the Gullahs maintained a generous attitude, never allowing one of their number to go without food or shelter. Kinship was important, but the Gullah concept of a household did not necessarily mean filial attachment, but all those living within a family and community structure, with the rights, duties, and privileges therein. While there were many children without parents because of the ravages of bondage, reportedly there were no orphans on the Sea Islands. Gullahs were also fond of bestowing presents upon their Northern benefactors, or anyone whom they considered a friend. Gifts of sweet potatoes, peanuts, and eggs which had a special spiritual significance and were rather expensive, were often offered to visitors. "They feel hurt if their presents are refused," wrote Laura Towne. "Old Susannah often sends to table, fish and other extras. They don't want pay. No indeed."[10]

While the Christian example contributed to inspiring a kindred spirit, the Gullah's sense of charity also had another source. African peoples

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on the plantation, seated on the box containing his dead body, and as the body was lowered into the grave, she was seized by a frenzied mob, forced into the open pit and every effort was made to bury her alive. These efforts nearly succeeded. But wiser counsels prevailed and she was at last released.[12]

In this situation moral judgment within the slave community was not in keeping with the Christian doctrine of forgiveness that usually characterized the Gullahs' disposition. Instead, it indicates how African influences continued. Apparently, Gullahs believed that some violations should not be summarily dismissed or forgiven. Among the Windward Coast peoples, no concept of sin seems to have been present. Yet among some, the Mende for example, there was a sense of guilt in two areas of government—breaches in communal laws and regulations, and violation of the rights of those unable to help themselves. The BaKongo considered sin to be a wrong against society, not God, and thus should be punished by society. The above Gullah crime could be viewed as betrayal of communal trust, an individual violation, and as an immoral act against the people as a whole. Such violations called for punishment, not only for the offender, but for those closely related to the act.[13] Such irrevocable behavior among the bondspeople could possibly undermine their collective strength and organization, and no doubt Gullahs felt that depravity should be rooted out in a drastic manner as a warning to others who might be driven to commit such violence. Yet the fact that the example was an atypical incident demonstrates that adoption of a common socioreligious connection among Gullahs had more of a restraining effect on deviant social behavior than threat of violent retaliation.

In the Gullah slave community the most important people were religious leaders, comprising two groups. One consisted of black elders, and the others were spiritual parents, or the black elders' "help." Black elders were chosen by whites, often by Baptist planters. These black leaders, referred to as "deacons" or "watchmen" were responsible for "watchcare" of members of the plantation societies. They were the experienced church members in the quarters, having some knowledge of Christianity and probably taking their religion more literally and seriously than their fellow bondspeople. Black elders maintained relatively close contact with the Baptist churches during the last thirty years of bondage, and were exemplary people, managing to walk a thin line between securing the trust and confidence of both masters and slaves.[14] Undoubtedly, to the slaveholders black elders embodied those features of Christianity which,

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they hoped, would encourage obedience, docility, humility, and a "turn-the-other-cheek" attitude. The elders' judgment was important to planters, who realized the influence these leaders exercised. Masters probably depended upon the reasoning power of elders, expecting them to use Christianity as a soothing influence in the slave quarters. Although law forbade black religious gatherings without three slaveholders being present, this edict was grossly violated in the Lowcountry, as probably elsewhere, and black societies were rarely visited by whites supposedly superintending black worship.

Thus, black elders' duties of oversight, direction, watchcare, and advice were extensive. Since they ultimately had the last word on whether or not the "Christian" character of a "seeker" of religion warranted that individual's being accepted into "de Ark ob Safety," the supremacy of these leaders was considerable.[15] Yet black elders undoubtedly used their position of power with measure, fairness, and to benefit of the slave community, for they always maintained respect among the bondspeople. Their message was one of encouragement and their capacity to inspire moral confidence largely depended upon their verbal ability, gravity of deportment, and consistent record of honesty and correctness. As guardians of the community and articulators of group values, they may have counseled patience and been the main proponents of the Christian attitude of "resignation," which observers attributed to some Gullahs, as a form of protection. Above all, black elders were firm about depredations within the slave quarters, watching closely "to detect some delinquency" or "any shortcomings," yet ready to forgive an errant member.

> They visit, pray with and exhort the sick, rebuke the impenitent, counsel the weak, conduct social meetings for prayer, whenever such meetings are permitted by the proprietor of a plantation, and especially have vigilant watch over the young, striving to keep them in the path of rectitude.[16]

The other group of religious leaders, spiritual fathers and mothers, were not white-sanctioned leaders of the Praise House, but among the Gullahs they were recognized as legitimate and reportedly had "the most absolute authority over them." They were a continuous foil to Methodist missionaries and often disliked by planters because these religious leaders successfully incorporated non-Christian elements into white Protestantism. From this group came Praise House leaders and the "committee" that acted as the religious court. Thus on an individual plantation, the

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"help" who held Praise House membership, conducted religious services, and oversaw local religious activity was actually more significant than the black elder who might oversee several plantations. Like the elders, spiritual leaders were loved, respected, and faithful in those things pertaining to the welfare of the religious community. The spiritual leaders' influence belonged to a tradition older than the black elders' role.[17] They undoubtedly adjusted to Christianity by making a place for themselves in the heart of it as practiced by Gullahs. Also Baptist elders, though having the interests of the community at heart, may have imbibed too much of the new religion and been too willing to preach and teach conservatism. Thus for the Gullahs, the power of and respect for plantation spiritual parents exceeded that of Baptist-sanctioned elders. The former were healers, interpreters of dreams, signs, and visions, all of which were central to Gullah conceptions of religion and infused with their impressionistic form of Christianity.[18] The functions of the two types of religious leaders may have overlapped to some degree and also complemented each other. They represent different aspects of the Gullahs' spiritual existence—one Christian, the other African—and an element of syncretism within slave religion.

Examination of Gullah methods of admission to church membership is one key to understanding the significance of the spiritual leader's role, Gullah socioreligious spiritualism, and links with a West African past. A candidate's acceptance into the church and subsequently into the Praise House depended upon relating a satisfactory experience, which was the result of a soul-grappling, traumatic confrontation between the individual and a higher power, culminating, if successful, in a sensation of rebirth and full membership in the religious community. The period of transition between the time a desire to become a Christian was expressed and the acceptance by elders of the religious experience was called "seekin'."

The name, "seekin'" was introduced to the Gullahs by Methodist missionaries. At meetings with slaves, after preaching and teaching, the Methodists would then inquire if anyone would like to come forward and "seek Jesus." Those who professed such a desire would then go "on trial" and remain in this limbo status until the missionary deemed them ready for baptism. Probationers, or "seekers of religion," were required by Methodists to know the Creed, Sacraments, and Lord's Prayer, and they were "not eligible for baptism until they had learned them under-

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175 793 795 band of singers and they sent up hymn after hymn during the exercises. Mr. Phillips and Siah went into the water. The Pastor extended his hands and his whole flock of candidates went forward into the water. Each one seemed to be attended by several friends or relatives, who besides being bodily support carried dry clothing, shawls, cloaks and overcoats. . . . They all gathered about the minister and Siah. Mr. Phillips took them in turn—each by one shoul[illegible] Siah laid hold of the other and together they immersed them, over one hu[illegible] and forty. As fast as they had been baptized they stepped to the shore, thos[illegible] before they reached there, their friends received them and shuffled them up . . . and hurried them off into the bushes. It took a long time to get through with so many, but after a while it was over and we all went back to church. All the candidates came out in shiny robes. . . . There was a great difference in their looks when they came into the church the second time. Then we had a long service after which the right hand of fellowship was given and . . . the sacrament was administered to them.[32]

175 794 795 [171] Resemblance is noted between the African secret society candidates' "turning out" and the Gullahs' "baptizin'." Both situations represented the emergence of a new individual whose status as a full member of the community was illustrated by a water burial. This new position was not only expressed by immersion but by the wearing of new garments and partaking of a communion service with family, friends, and, in the case of Gullahs, only "true believers" of the Baptist faith. In both instances the event was as impressive as it was significant. Like the new Christians, African initiates returning from the bush were considered "newborns from the belly of the Devil." All claims against them were forgiven and they were not responsible for any contract or behavior displayed prior to being devoured by the devil and reemerging as new beings.[33]

No ceremony symbolized an individual's initiation into the church and community more than baptism. For Gullahs, this had to be total immersion. Even those salves who joined the Methodist church usually insisted on total immersion rather than "mere sprinkling." Perhaps this preference was a latent memory of secret society initiation, with total immersion representing absolute commitment to the Gullahs' socioreligious culture. It is also possible that, as some Methodist missionaries believed, Gullahs were confident that "baptism by total immersion is a means of a present, full and eternal salvation; and that after you have been baptized, it is impossible to sin or fall from grace."[34] Yet the most significant feature of the Gullahs' attachment to total immersion may have been that this black community interpreted performance of the rite as symbolically

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adding to a collective attitude in the quarters. Total immersion was exclusively their way of being baptized and, although a Christian service, the pomp, color, and ceremony was original to the slaves. The Gullahs' method of baptism, with its solemn pageantry, had African antecedents as well as Christian form. But more important, from the slaves' point of view, the rite was uniquely a prerequisite for community stature within their own society.

Gullah efforts to construct an organized harmonious social system was further illustrated by the fact that, while collective affiliation in the slave quarters was most significant, a sense of individual fulfillment was also essential. Hence, while "seekin'" culminated in acceptance of socialization through church membership, the experience itself was a private one and the desire to "seek Jesus" was a slave's personal decision, although not devoid of community pressure. The travel, the visions, and the solitude possibly represented a bondsperson's inner reflection and recognition of "self" as opposed to his or her treatment as "thing" by the master. Efforts toward acquiring a valuable self-image is related in the slave's dependence on the spiritual parent who listened to and interpreted individual experiences. The significance of individual experience also had its source in the personal attachment to and identification with Christ, prophets, and disciples rather than to perceived abstractions and inapplicable doctrines within Christianity. Moreover, Gullah cultural achievements represent manifestations of individual creativity as well as collective will and fortitude.

In the Gullah socioreligious community, exclusiveness served collective goals perhaps in the way that secrecy in Poro and Sande expressed loyalty, solidarity, and trust. One illustration of this was the practice of close communion among Gullahs. Close communion was actually an elitist doctrine which the slaves apparently adopted from their Calvinist-oriented Baptist slavemasters. American Missionary Association ministers stated that the Gullahs practiced close communion before they came. "I find that the colored people understand the doctrine of 'close communion' perfectly well," wrote the Reverend Augustine Roots from Port Royal in 1863. "I have however said, myself nothing about the matter of communion." This was not the opinion of Laura Towne. She related that a white Baptist minister, Mr. Horton, informed the Gullahs that no one "who taught different doctrines" had any right "even to stand in the pulpit." Horton further told the Gullahs that those with different reli-

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gious persuasions "had no right" to come to church communion. Many Northern teachers were Unitarians. Others followed no faith. Still, they enjoyed the Gullah church services and felt that the bondspeople wanted them at communion. In any case a denominational feud erupted in the occupied area. Some Gullahs did not agree with the exclusion practice, and insisted that white antebellum Baptists and Episcopalians even communed together in the Sea Island region, and no doctrinal proscription was made. "So," wrote Towne, "Mr. Horton has not the excuse he gave for his course, that it was already established." After creating the issue Mr. Horton left the region and Mr. Phillips came in his place. Phillips sided with Northern teachers and missionaries. Towne, a Unitarian, stated that the "Reverend Mr. Phillips was here today and says the elders asked by what right we stayed to communion." Phillips interceded on behalf of the teachers, but met firm resistance. "Mr. Phillips . . . says the elders decided to exclude us from communion," related Towne. Later, the teachers continued to press the issue with an influential Gullah leader:

> Nelly had today, I think, a long talk with Demas upon close communion, but he was immovable, as might be supposed. He did not think much of the theological arguments of a girl like Nelly; and he is perfectly unbending by nature.[33]

For a people whose knowledge of Christian doctrine was marginal, and whose spiritual nature was one of warmth and generosity, it was uncharacteristic of the Gullahs to embrace staunchly such a rigid theological doctrine. If close communion was not a concept introduced to the Gullahs by Baptist masters, their use of the concept is even more interesting and further illustrates their adaptive capacity. Yet it was practiced all over the region. Gullahs continued to follow the close communion model, scolding members who worshiped outside of their religious structure. While they frequently invited and always welcomed white Northern missionaries and others to "jine praise wid we," the Gullahs remained adamant about refusing communion to those not of their faith. Perhaps Gullahs interpreted the ritualistic sacrament as a private ceremony among church members and believed that its usefulness in fostering unity and harmony among believers was best served by keeping others out of fellowship. This included white non-Baptists as well as black nonbelievers. The one construct resembling law, custom, practice, and system that Gullahs could consider their own was their religious societies and the beliefs contained therein. Black societies were indeed "invisible

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institutions," and they were controlled from within. While confusion and vacillation occurred in other areas, within Gullah black societies there was organization, structure, and a cameraderie transferable to the slave quarters. Religion was their "fixed point" and the one realm where they needed authority if a group attitude was to be maintained. The concept of close communion was not completely new, given the African heritage. And black elders insisted that only members of the societies had a right to fellowship, for probably no event more symbolized integration of the individual into the socioreligious connection than acceptance of the elements representing the mystical blood and body of Christ. This ritual bound members of the various societies. The more exclusive the event, the more it impressed upon the communicants the responsibilities entailed. By joining society, Praise House, and church, an individual became a full participant in the community. Communion service epitomized this relationship. Communion was not only a method of initiating new converts into the socioreligious connection, but a way of reminding old members of their commitments. In addition to being "de Ark ob Safety" in the spiritual sense, communion was possibly a conduct agreement, restricting antisocial behavior yet inspiring a feeling of personal status very much in the way that Poro and Sande did in West Africa. Gullahs and Africans used their religion to fulfill sacred and secular communal needs in similar ways. In both instances the main emphasis was on community preservation. In each case an institution evolved that initiated individuals into society and committed them to abide by the customs, beliefs, and practices of the group for the sake of unity and order, while not ignoring the members' need to maintain a sense of self.

Once the candidates were baptized and given communion, they were then members of the black society and the plantation Praise House. This new status gave former candidates the right to participate in the ring shout which was held at the praise meeting or in the home of the individual considered to be the most pious. One of the earliest available antebellum description of the ring shout was provided by Charles Lyell, who traveled through the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands in 1848. According to Lyle, on the Hopeton plantation of James Hamilton Couper, over twenty violins were silenced by the Methodist missionaries. Thus was music and dancing, the slaves' chief form of merrymaking, prohibited. Yet Methodists did allow slaves to engage in a form of physical exercise after prayer meetings, hence the origin of the "shout":

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At the Methodist prayer-meetings, they are permitted to move round rapidly in a ring, joining hands in token of brotherly love, presenting the right hand and then the left, in which maneuver, I am told, they sometimes contrive to take enough exercise to serve as a substitute for the dance, it being in fact a kind of spiritual boulanger.[36]

Physical expressions of religious fervor had been a feature of eighteenth-century Methodism. But the phenomenon had for the most part disappeared by the time of the Methodist slave conversion movement. While most Methodist missionaries frowned upon slaves' religious expressions, others heeded the instruction of William Capers, superintendent of missions, to allow the slaves to "be themselves" in matters of worship, so long as they abided by the discipline.[37] Hence, although worldly entertainment was forbidden, in some cases religious exercise was not. Baptist planters may have permitted the shout to exist because they saw no harm in such behavior and recognized the therapeutic effects of such "periodic releases." Thus, the shout ritual, among other things, can be seen as a cathartic which enabled slaves to act out tensions, anxieties, and suppressed facets of themselves in an approved manner.

While Gullahs considered the shout to be a religious, even Christian practice, it was their own creation. At the Praise House, shouts only took place after service had ended and the benediction announced. Also, while Gullahs sang Methodist and Baptist hymns at the praise meetings, when time came for a shout, the slaves sang only their own spirituals.[38]

Some accounts of the shout indicate that three or four people stood and sang, clapping and gesticulating, while others shuffled along on their heels, following each other in a circle, bending the knees slightly. The movements began slowly, a few going around and others joining in vocally and kinetically, while the song became faster and faster, "till at last only the most marked part of the refrain is sung and the shuffling, stamping and clapping get furious." According to Laura Towne, the floor shook dangerously, swaying rhythmically in time with the song. The dancers would get out of breath only after long periods of time, rest for awhile, and begin again, as the several outside of the ring kept up the singing. Charlotte Forten, a black teacher from the North, added color and imagery to the shout scene she witnessed:

> . . . at the close of the Praise-Meeting, they all shake hands in the most solemn manner. Afterward, as a kind of appendix, they have a grand "shout" during

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which they sing their own hymns. . . . The first shout that we witnessed . . . impressed us very much. The large gloomy room, with its blackened walls—the wild whirling dance of the shouters,—the crowd of dark, eager faces gathered around,—the figure of the old blind man, whose excitement could hardly be controlled, and whose attitude and gestures while singing were very fine—and over all, the red glare of the burning pine-knot, which shed a circle of light around it, but only seemed to deepen and darken the shadows in the other parts of the room,—these all formed a wild, strange, and deeply impressive picture, not soon to be forgotten.[39]

Only members of the Praise House could join in the ring shout. Children were taught the shout at a very early age but never allowed to participate in or attend religious gatherings where the shout was performed until they became Praise House members. Once membership was attained, the new converts were welcomed into the Praise House by the opportunity to lead the ring shout and illustrate their ability.[40]

Most Northern teachers were at first appalled when they observed the shout. "I never saw anything so savage," wrote Laura Towne. "They call it a religious ceremony, but it seems more like a regular frolic to me." "The shout reminds one of a pagan performance," wrote a Ladies Island teacher. Arthur Sumner referred to it as "a strange, barbaric Central-African dance and song." Yet Gullahs insisted that the shout was religious and that each movement and step had spiritual significance. The steps never changed and even after freedom the shout was not altered by maneuvers that might have been learned at a "worldly dance." A watchful leader made sure that the feet were never crossed. Some whites, after coming to know and understand the Gullahs, reversed their initial critical stance. Laura Towne spent the rest of her life with the Gullahs after going there during the Civil War. She grew to love and respect the Gullahs enough to appreciate their forms of expression. "Went to a fine shout today," she wrote in her diary after a few years' stay on the Sea Islands.[41]

The Gullah ring shout, like the travel and the vision, involved an altered state of consciousness and had the attributes of "possession." It represented either an unusual behavior inspired and controlled by an outside agent, in this case the Holy Spirit, or the outside agent displaced the individual's personality and acted in its stead.[42] The background of the Gullah ring shout, a manifestation of possession trance, was West African in origin and an important characteristic of the initiation process.

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000 African initiation, beginning with a symbolic death, a journey to the spirit world, and complete rupture with one's past life and personality, was a time of lethargy, isolation, and prostration. As a result of contact with the spirits (nameless objects or ancestors) while in the bush, the novice's personality was modified in the image of a deity, and the individual was said to have become godlike through association—hence the Mano term "little spirits of the bush." Spirit possession took place during bush-life, itself represented as a period of unconsciousness when the initiate departed the domain of reason. The neophyte emerged from the experience "reborn," with a secondary spiritual personality inculcated as a type of conditioned reflex. When cultural and environmental forces interacted with these individual personalities from similar traditions, a psychological, collective process that was rarely conscious could be stimulated. The baptism or "sacred bath" purged the initiate's mind of previous attitudes, and future behavior would be an emulation of the true spirit within, or "little me."[43] Hence possession behavior can be interpreted as part of a society's efforts to incorporate into a coherent system the natural and supernatural worlds. Since possession was a public ceremony, where one demonstrated his or her individual spiritual presence in a sharing experiental manner, the phenomenon can be seen as solidifying human collectivity and providing a further basis for the participants to create a socioreligious network of communication and interaction. In the following description of a shout recorded more than fifty years after slavery, it illustrates possession in full force among Sea Island blacks, and suggests how certain African religious cult themes could have been retained. This shout, in a St. Helena Island Praise House, involved "welcoming and initiating" three teenage boys baptized into the church that morning. The Praise House leader announced that, "After givin' de right han' of fellowship to dese t'ree boys," the benediction would take place, after which "we'll gib dese boys de opportunity to exercise deyselbes wid de shout." The new converts were allowed to begin and demonstrate their ability to "exercise deyselbes." As people pushed back the benches, there was laughter and conversation as the shout began. The three youths stamped the floor, clapped their hands rhythmically, and moved around and around the open space in the center of the floor, "which was walled in by encouraging older people and other young people, all singing "De bell dun rung." The people commented on the shouters, such expressions as "Yoner look at Johnny, he exercise fur tru enty?"

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or "Com' on, let's git indey widdem." The others joined in, now paying little attention to the new members. The three initiates, while no longer leading the shout, were "determined boys in their teens," and seemed bent on holding the center of attention. They clapped and stamped louder, and again assumed leadership of the group of shouters:

Clear, distinct, and strong their treble voices took up the shout song. Above all the voices in the room theirs could be heard singing "De bell dun rung, de bell dun rung, de bell dun rung." Catching the contagious enthusiasm of these youthful voices, the others in the ring and those around the wall sang louder and louder. Yet above the rhythmic thud of the heels of the shouters as they jerked themselves around the circle in perfect two-four time, above the deafening din of the hand clapping, above the boisterous laughter and giggling of those who had stepped outside to "cool off" and were pressing one another against the quivering window sill of the open windows was heard the initiates with a note of frenzy in their shrill clear voices as they screamed the shout song, "De bell dun rung, de bell dun rung, de bell dun rung," which many of their associates in the circle were incoherently muttering with apparently little effort toward articulation. Just as a whirling dynamo generates a magnetic field, so this vibrant circle varying in diameter according to the endurance of the participants turning on, and on, seemed to create a desire which could not be satisfied until each one yielded to the irrestible urge to "git in dey widdem."[44]

The shout as a form of expression may have been a way of reconciling contradictory tendencies among individuals. Certainly not all of the participants were identically inspired, but probably had a number of different, authentic, subjective motivations and sought an outlet in a similar type of collective behavior. Hence, on the conscious level, the West African tradition notwithstanding, engaging in a ring shout had a variety of appeals for the Gullahs as slaves. It was a form of entertainment, a substitute for the social activity they were forced to relinquish, an individual release for pent-up frustrations and hostilities, a dimension of their religious spirit which linked them to natural and supernatural forces, and a mode of liaison among themselves. The following antebellum account of a Christmas shout on one of the Barnwell Sea Island plantations provides insight into the multifaceted meaning of this ceremony for the Gullahs:

The Negroes never went to sleep on the night before Xmas. They held prayers all night in the largest house at the settlement. This was Daddy January's house. Jack (foreman) could read and also August Baker our houseservant. Our mother had given both of them Testaments and Prayerbooks. I can still recall very dis-

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29. Ibid., 113–30.

30. "Historical Sketch of the Euhaw Baptist Church," submitted for private reading by church officers, 1928, Euhaw Baptist Church Mss., SCL; David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (New York: Lewis Colby, 1848; repr. from 1813 ed.) 701–3; James W. Busch, "The Beaufort Baptist Church," Beaufort County Historical Society Paper, n.d., 4–5, Beaufort Township Library; John Archibald Armstrong, "Beaufort and the Sea Islands, Their History and Traditions," compiled from newspaper articles in the *Beaufort Republican*, 1867–1873, Beaufort Township Library; Joe Madison King, *A History of South Carolina Baptists* (Columbia: General Board, South Carolina Baptist Convention, 1964), 10–17, 26–38; quoted from James H. Cuthbert, *Life of Richard Fuller*, (New York: Scheldon Co., 1789), 12–13.

31. Lawton Family Papers, SCL: Charlotte Verstille to Nancy Verstille, February 9 and March 2, 1821, Tristram Verstille Papers, SCL; Chalmers D. Davidson, *The Last Foray: The South Carolina Plantations in 1860: A Sociological Study* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1975), 96–99; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 6; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 92–96, 146–47; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 13, 15, 78–79.

32. Brooks, "Silver Bluff Church," 172–82; "Early Negro Churches," 70–71; Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 12–13; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 139. In the Peedee region, the Welsh Neck Church, formed in 1738, was a large congregation whose extensive black membership was organized into a separate church in 1779. This was a short-lived experiment, ending in 1782. At that time, some whites and a "greater number of blacks" were excommunicated by a new minister who discovered that upon examination, the blacks especially "appeared to be very ignorant of the nature of true religion." King, *South Carolina Baptists*, 39–44.

33. Brooks, "Silver Bluff Church," 174–76, 178, 182, 191; Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 29–31.

34. Mrs. J. H. Redding, *Life and Times of Jonathan Bryan 1708–1788* (Savannah: Morning News Print, 1901), 43; "Early Negro Churches," 77–79; Brooks, "Silver Bluff Church," 186–87; John Rippon, ed., *Baptist Annual Register for 1798–1801* (London: Dilly, Button, Thomas, 1802), 366–67; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*. Andrew's church spawned two sister churches in Savannah by the early nineteenth century.

35. Brooks, "Silver Bluff Church," 181–190; "Early Negro Churches," 83–87; Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 11.

36. Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 10–12, 29–31; Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 4–5; Kathleen Tudor, "David George: Black Loyalist," *Nova Scotia Historical Society* 3, no. 1 (1983): 71–75.

37. Donald Blake Touchstone, "Planters and Slave Religion in the Deep South," (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1973), 9–14, Redding, *Jonathan Bryan*, 44–45.

38. Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, 135–40, 44–45; Matthew Tate to Benjamin Rush, October 1, 1792, Benjamin Rush Correspondence, vol. 7: 6, HSP.

39. Diary of John Bartram, 78–79, John Bartram Papers, HSP.

40. U.S. Census Office, *First Census, 1790* (Philadelphia: Childs and Swaine, 1791), 54; "Diary of Timothy Ford," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 45 (1944): 142–45.

41. Abigail Capers to Eliza Russell, March 25, 1971; James McBride Dabbs Papers, SHC.

42. John Bartram Diary, July 1, 1765–April 10, 1766, John Bartram Papers, HSP; Johnson, *Social History*, 18–26, 115–118; Armstrong, "Sea Islands History," 30; Euhaw Baptist Church Mss., March 14, 1834, SCL; Charlotte Verstille to Nancy Verstille, March 2, 1821, Tristram Verstille Papers, SCL.

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175 113 *of Charleston Meeting*, 5–6, 14; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, October 21, 1841, 4, BC.

12. Thomas Bennett to Richard Furman, 1822, Furman Papers, SCL; Charles C. Pinckney, *An Address Delivered in Charleston Before the Agricultural Society of South Carolina, At Its Annual Meeting, 18th August, 1829* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1829), passim; James O. Andrew, "The Southern Slave Population," *MMQR* 13 (1831): 315–17; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 14–15.

13. "South Carolina through New England Eyes, Almira Coffin's Visit to the Low Country in 1851," John H. Tucker to T. D. Grimke, n.d., early in 1845, SCHS; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 71–72; "Pastoral Address," *Minutes of the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, December 25, 1844, 14–15, HSSCC; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1848, 6, November 24, 1849, 7–8, BC; *SCA*, January 29, 1847; John B. Adger, *A Sermon Preached by the Rev. J. B. Adger of the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston, S. C.*, May 9, 1847 (Charleston: T. W. Haynes, 1847), 12–13, and *Life and Times*, 164–99; Reverend Alexander Glennie, *Sermons Preached on Plantations to Congregations of Negroes* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1844), passim; Charles Colcock Jones, *Suggestions on the Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the Southern States* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847, 27–33; and *A Catechism of Scripture Doctrine and Practice* (Savannah: T. Purse, 1844), passim; Reverend A. F. Dickson, *Plantation Sermons* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1855), passim; Tupper, *Baptist Church of South Carolina*, 317–18; Donald Blake Touchstone, "Planters and Slave Religion in the Deep South," (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1973), 71–85; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, Chapter 4; Rev. J. H. Thornwell, *The Rights and Duties of Masters. A Sermon Preached at the Dedication of A Church Erected in Charleston, S. C., For the Benefit and Instruction of the Colored Population* (Charleston: Steam-Power Press, 1850), 48–51.

14. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1848, 6–7, November 24, November 26, 1853, 10–11, November 25, 1854, 19, November 23, 1855, 12, November 14, 1857, BC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, April 9, 1841, 15, November 11, 1843, 66, BC; Benedict, *Fifty Years among the Baptists*, 39.

15. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, passim, BC; see Appendix C, tables C.1 and C.2; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, August 7, 1853, 179, BC; Fred Jones, "Report on Church History: A Historical Sketch of the Old Black Swamp Church," Lawton Family Papers, SCL.

16. See Chapters 3 and 4.

175 13 199 17. Busch, "Beaufort Church," 13; Jones, "Old Black Swamp Church"; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 26, 1831, 18–20, BC; *CAJ*, January 6, 1832; Diary of William P. Hill, 1833–39, SHC (Hill was a Universalist from Maine who went South for health reasons and became a Baptist preacher); Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 67–68; W. H. Dowling, "Black Swamp Church," n.d., SCL; Baker, *Life and Labours*, 144–45, 157, 169–73.

18. Baker, *Life and Labours*, 153; Samuel Gaillard Stoney, ed. "The Autobiography of William John Grayson," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 49, no. 1 (January, 1948): 34–36.

17 113 19. Baker, *Life and Labours*, 153; Stoney, "Autobiography of Grayson," 34–36.

20. *CAJ*, January 6, 1832; Stoney, "*Autobiography of Grayson*," 34–37.

21. Baker, *Life and Labours*, 154–55.

• (194) 22. Racial designations were not yet indicated nor names of slaves included on membership rolls. But the slaves' acceptance into the church was recorded in the Minutes. *Minutes,*

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Beaufort Baptist Church, Membership Rolls, and see Appendix C, tables C.1 and C.2; *Minutes, Euhaw Baptist Church*, 11–12, 14, 16, 18–19, 32, 55–56, 58, 66–68, 70; Jones, "Old Black Swamp Church."

23. Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 79–82; Stoney, "Autobiography of Grayson," 36; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, passim, BC; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 13–17. Within this same article is a section entitled "Richard Fuller and Slavery," 11; and see Appendix C, tables C.1 and C.2.

24. Johnson, *Social History*, 103; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 15–20, 67–79; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 14–16.

25. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, passim, BC; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 81–106; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 14–16.

26. "Former Slaves Recollect Fuller," in Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 106–113; Charlotte Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands," Part I, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (May, 1864): 589–90.

27. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 26, 1853, 10–11; November 25, 1854, 16; November 14, 1857, 10–11, BC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, July 12, 1857, 2–3, 35; November 7, 1857, 241–43, BC.

28. This is an estimate and represents population based on the 1830 census returns. U.S. Census Office, *Sixth Census, 1840* (Washington: T. Allen, 1841), 95; see Appendix C. tables C.1 and C.3.

29. See Appendix C, table C.2; U.S. Census, *Sixth Census*, 95–96, 226–27; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 22, 1845, 16, BC; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 48–50; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, 273, BC.

30. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1848, 5, November 1859, BC; see Appendix C, table C.3.

31. Baker, *Life of Laborers*, 155–56; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 13; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 15–16, 64–65, 67–75; John Stapleton Papers, SCL, have information on the Rhetts, who bought Frogmore Plantation, St. Helena, from Stapleton in 1836; Jones, "Old Black Swamp Church"; Charlotte Verstille to Nancy Verstille, March 2, 1821, Tristram Verstille Papers, SCL; Diary of John Edwin Fripp, Beaufort Township Library; For Princeton preference see "Notes and Documents; Antebellum and War Memories of Mrs. Telfair Hodgson," Sarah Hodgson Torian, ed., *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (December, 1953): 352; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 88–91; Johnson, *Social History*, 103–11; Hill Diary, SHC; Baptist Church at Black Swamp Mss., Lawton Family Papers, SCL; George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 19 vols., *South Carolina Narratives*, vols. 2 and 3 in 4 Parts (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing), II (1) 155–58, 161–62; Jenkins Mikell, *Rumblings of the Chariot Wheels* (Columbia: The State Co., 1923), 201; Johnson, *Social History*, 114–15; Henry Noble Sherwood, ed., Introduction, "Journal of Miss Susan Walker, March 3d to June 6, 1862," *Historical and Philosphical Society of Ohio* 7 (January–March, 1912): 5.

32. Mikell, *Chariot Wheels*, 201–2; Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record*, Supp. I (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1871), 197–202; William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 353–56; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 140–43, 203–11; Mason Crum, *Gullah, Negro Life in the Carolina Sea Islands* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940), 35–54.

33. Edward L. Pierce, "The Freedmen at Port Royal," *Atlantic Monthly*, 12 (September, 1863): 295.

34. Janet Duitsman Cornelius, "God's Schoolmaster: Southern Evangelists to the Slaves, 1830–1860," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), 16–22; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 140–58.

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35. Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller, 140–58*; Smith, *In His Image, But*, 133–36, 138–39; King, South Carolina Baptists, 211–12.

36. David Donald, ed., *Inside Lincoln's Cabinet* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1954), 69–70.

37. William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, Fletcher Pratt, ed. (New York: Harper Brothers, 1854), 76–77; Busch, "Beaufort Church," sections entitled "Work among the Negroes," 3 and "Richard Fuller and Slavery," 1; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, October 9, 1840, 11, October 8, 1841, 23, October 8, 1842, 39, BC; *Minutes, Euhaw Baptist Church*, October 9, 1836, 59; September 24, 1838, 66, SCL; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 104–6; C. C. Pinckney to William Capers, January 24, 1835, HSSCC; *SCA*, September 29, 1843; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina* II (2) 72–73, 184–85, 279, III (3) 202, 274.

38. *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 49.

39. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, "Origin of the Colored Societies," October 7, 1859, Business Meeting in which the organization of the societies is discussed, 271–74, January 7, 1842 and November 11, 1840, 12, BC; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 83–104; *CAJ*, January 31, 1834; Field to Moore, March 21, 1833, HSSCC.

40. See Chapter 6.

41. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, 12, BC.

42. Ibid., 271–72.

43. Ibid., 271–74; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II: (2) 185.

44. *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 48–49; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, April 9, 1847, 111, passim, BC; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II (2) 184–85; Rev. Mansfield French to Revs. Whipple and Jocelyn in Elizabeth Ware Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969; repr. from 1906 ed.), 20. The spelling generally is *Praise* House. Black and white Northerners living among the Gullahs during the Civil War spelled the word thusly. But Samuel Lawton did research in the Sea Islands in the 1920s and indicates the word was "Prays," named for its function as a place of prayer. According to Lawton, Gullah pronunciation of the flat "a" and dropping of the final syllable on many words explain why no difference was noted between "prays" and "praise." Lawton interviewed former Sea Island slaves in the 1920s who referred to the plantation meetinghouse as "Pray House" without the "s" sound, or they pronounced two syllables very distinctly, "pray-ers house." Informants stated it was "Way ooner go fur pray." Gullahs changed verbs into nouns without adding the extra ending. Thus, at the meetinghouse, "One pray. Den Anudder lead a pray"—Dat make two prays." Lawton's argument is reinforced by Patricia Guthrie's more recent fieldwork in the 1970s. According to Guthrie, "Praise houses are also known locally and in the literature as prayer and pray houses." The Gullahs' mastering of double meaning however may also inform the discussion. They often asked white Northerners to "jine praise wid we." Also their anthem, "New Jerasulem," stated, "Sing God praise both night and day." Thus the Gullahs went to the meetinghouse to *praise* and *pray*. Samuel Lawton, "The Religious Life of Coastal and Sea Island Negroes," (Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1939), 54–56; Patricia Guthrie, "Praise House Worship and Litigation Among Afro-Americans on a South Carolina Sea Island," Paper, Sixth Annual Martin Luther King Lecture Series, Purdue University, February 21, 1980, 1.

45. Rawick *American Slave, South Carolina* II (2) 279–80, III (3) 200–202; Diary of John Edwin Fripp, 1857–58 and 1865–68, 24, Beaufort Township Library; Russell, *My Diary North and South*, 71–77; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 15–20; Minutes, *Beaufort Baptist Church*, April 9, 1841, 15, May 14, 1842, 34, BC. August 12, 1843, 61–62; October 1, 1853, 180,

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BC. A good example of how little attention some masters paid to slaves is provided in the T. B. Chaplin Journal, edited by Theodore Rosengarten. Chaplin probably spent more time supervising his property than most Sea Island planters. However Rosengarten writes: "Because Chaplin had very little to do with his slaves outside of work, we seldom see them in their quarters and only then when peace is disturbed." T. B. Chaplin was on the Episcopalian side of the family and "appears to have invested nothing in the spiritual welfare of his slaves." Some of his slaves did join the Island Baptist church through the "praise house." Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 145, 147, 151.

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46. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1854, November 23, 1855, BC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, June 10, 1843, 61–62, September 4, 1852, 171, September 12, 1854, 197, November 7, 1857, 241–42, BC; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 147; Pierce Butler to A. Marvin, March 19, 1839, Letterbook, 1838–1840, box 38, Wistar Papers, Butler Section, HSP.

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47. James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Baptist Church Discipline: An Historical Introduction to the Practices of Baptist Churches, with Particular Attention to the Summary of Church Discipline Adopted in 1773 by the Charleston Association* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1962), 3–4, 10–18, 28; King, *South Carolina Baptists*, 62–63. The Baptist religion as it developed in the Lowcountry from Georgetown southward to the Beaufort District was considerably different from that planted in the upcountry. The latter was closer to the frontier Baptist tradition. Unlike "Regular" Baptists of the Lowcountry, the "frontier theology" was a compromise of Arminian and Calvinist views. King, *South Carolina Baptists*, 38, 148; Sidney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 440–43.

48. Garrett, *Baptist Church Discipline*, 39–44; J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 100–04; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 180–81; King, *South Carolina Baptists*, 38, 148–55; Daniel W. Hollis, "The Role of the Church in South Carolina History," *Journal of the South Carolina Baptist Historical Society* 4 (November, 1978): 11–13; Smith, *In His Image, But*, Chapter 2.

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49. *Minutes, Euhaw Baptist Church*, passim, SCL; *Minutes, Baptist Church at Black Creek*, 1828–1922, 15–59, SCL; Jones, "Old Black Swamp Church"; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, October 9, 1840, 10–11, BC; For information about discipline of slaves in other churches, see Cornelius, "God's Schoolmasters," 228–40; Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry*, 48–52.

50. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, August 12, 1843, 61–62.

51. Ibid., November 11, 1840, 12, April 5, 1852, 166, October 7, 1859, 272–73.

52. Ibid., October 8, 1840, 11, July 9, 1841, 19, July 8, 1842, 34; September 8, 1843, 63; April 5, 1855, 203–4.

53. Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II (2) 184; Allen Diary, 23, 57.

54. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, November 9, 1844, 83, April 5, 1852, 166, October 7, 1859, 272–73, BC; *Minutes, Euhaw Baptist Church*, February 5, 1832, 11, September 1848, 75, SCL.

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55. Fripp Diary, 60, Beaufort Township Library; Johnson, *Social History*: 47, 54; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, III (3) 200–201, 272; Diary of William F. Allen, 62, in William F. Allen Family Papers, 1775–1937, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison.

56. John W. Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 374, 381; Forten, "Sea Islands," Part I, 668; Diary of Laura M. Towne, 15, Penn School Papers, SHC.

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15. Berlin, *Freedom: Black Military Experience*, 54–55; Higginson, *Army Life*, 63, 72, 86–105, 149–50; H. G. Spaulding, "Under the Palmetto," *Continental Monthly* 4 (August, 1963): 202–3; Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 64, 87–93.

16. Higginson, *Army Life*, 46–48, 70–71, 240–41; Spaulding, "Under the Palmetto," 196.

17. Allen Diary, 82–83; Pearson, *Port Royal*, 99, n. 1, 102, 114, 181–82; Charles Nordhoff, "The Freedmen of South Carolina," in Frank Moore, ed., *Papers of the Day* (New York: C. T. Evans, 1863), 4–5; Towne Diary, 14, 21; Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 143–56.

18. Forten, "Sea Islands, Part I, 588.

19. Rupert Holland, ed. *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1912), 26.

20. Higginson, *Army Life*, 192; Tilden G. Edelstein, *Strange Enthusiasm: A Life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (New York: Atheneum, 1970; repr. from 1968 ed.) 257–60.

21. Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 204; Forten, "Sea Islands," Part II, 672; Allen Diary, 164.

22. Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 204.

23. Higginson, *Army Life*, 208.

24. Edelstein, *Strange Enthusiasm*, 257–60 For an enlightening and provoking treatment of "romantic racialism" see George M. Frederickson, *Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), Chapter 4; William Francis Allen, Charles P. Ware, and Lucy M. Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: Peter Smith, 1951; repr. from 1867 ed.), 48; Higginson, *Army Life*, 208–9.

25. Rev. Mansfied French to Revs, Whipple and Jocelyn, n. d., AMA.

26. Higginson, *Army Life*, 235.

27. Ibid., 71, 236–38, and his Appendix D, 267–76.

28. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 457.

9. Folk Religion in the Slave Quarters

1. Mrs. William R. Wister, "Recollections of a Southern Plantation and School," Penn School Papers, vol. 5, 19, SHC; Rosa B. Cooley, *School Acres*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 148–49; Diary of Laura M. Towne, 52, Penn School Papers, SHC; "The Long Look," 2–3, undated sketch of a former slave, Sam Polite, who lived to be over 100 years old, Penn School Papers, vol. 1, SHC.

2. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, November 11, 1840 and January 7, 1842, 12; October 7, 1859, 271–74, BC; James H. Cuthbert, *Life of Richard Fuller* (New York: Sheldon Co., 1879), 104–5.

3. Cooley, *School Acres*, 148–49; Towne Diary, 52, Samuel Lawton, "The Religious Life of Coastal and Sea Island Negroes," (Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1939), 61, 69–72; William F. Allen et al., *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: Peter Smith, 1951; repr. from 1867 ed.) xviii.

4. Thomas J. Woofter, *Black Yeomanry* (New York: Henry Hold, 1930), 243–54; Towne Diary 26, 42; Charlotte Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands," Part II, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (June, 1864): 672; Edward L. Pierce, "The Negroes at Port Royal, S. C.," Doc. 51 in *Rebellion Record*, ed. Frank Moore, Suppl. 1 (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1871) 305; Lawton, "Religious Life," 54–57, 60–62; Patricia Guthrie, "Catching Sense: The Meaning

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of Plantation Membership on St. Helena Island, South Carolina," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1977).

5. *SCA*, July 28, 1843; Rupert Holland, ed. *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; repr. from 1912 ed.) 162; Rev. Augustine Roots to Rev. Jocelyn, February 8, 1863, AMA; Woofter, *Black Yeomanry*, 243–54; Jenkins Mikell, *Rumblings of the Chariot Wheels* (Columbia: The State Co., 1923), 138; Lawton, "Religious Life," 62–63, 69–72; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," Chapters 4 and 5.

6. Towne Diary, passim; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 95–97, 117–18; Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-lore of the Sea Islands of South Carolina* (Cambridge, Mass: American Folk-lore Society, 1923), 205–6; Lawton, "Religious Life," 61–23, 69–70.

7. Lawton, "Religious Life," 61–63; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 95–118. The Praise House membership consisted of households. These units were not always filial and might consist of several "outside children." Yet if these children "caught sense" in that household, they were members of that plantation. They were also members of the Praise House, could be buried in the plantation graveyard, and after slavery, could use the land. Plantation members tried to keep nonmembers off the land. Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 116–22.

8. Pierce, "Negroes at Port Royal," 305; Towne Diary, 55; Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 167–68; Rev. W. T. Richardson to Rev. Jocelyn, August 7, 1863, AMA; Arthur Sumner to Nina Hartsborn, May 18, 1862, Penn School Papers, vol. 4, SHC.

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13. W. T. Harris and Harry Sawyerr, *The Springs of Mende Belief and Conduct: A Discussion of the Influence of the Belief in the Supernatural among the Mende* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press) 103; W. C. Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu: A Sympathetic Study of the Magico-Religious Practices and Beliefs of the Bantu Tribes of Africa* (Newport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970, originally published 1928), 393.

14. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, 271–72, BC; James R. Stuart Recollections, n.d., circa 1850, 2–4, SHC; *SCA*, June 26, 1843; Holland, *Towne Letters and Diary*, 162, 145; Cooley, *School Acres*, 148–49; Charles A. Raymond "The Religious Life of the Negro Slave," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 27 (September, 1863): Part I, 479.

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PREFACE

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The future of American Negroes is in the South. Here they have made their greatest contribution to American culture; and here they have suffered the damnation of slavery, the frustration of reconstruction and the lynching of emancipation. . . . Here is the magnificent climate; here is the fruitful earth under the beauty of the Southern sun; and here, if anywhere on earth, is the need of the thinker, the worker, and the dreamer. This is the firing line.

W. E. B. DuBois, speech at Benedict College, Columbia, South Carolina, October 20, 1946

177 THE TRAFFIC on River Road is heavy. When I first came to this part of Johns Island in 1964, it was a quiet rural black community. Now expensive cars cruise past on their way to Kiawah and Seabrook islands. These resort islands can only be reached by driving across Johns Island and meeting the approval of a guard at a security gate. Beyond the guarded gates are plush hotels and upscale shopping facilities, beachfront houses and condominiums. Those who are waved through the checkpoint are mainly affluent visitors from afar.

• 794 533 The traditional and the modern coexist eerily on Johns Island now. I notice the incongruity at once in Wesley United Methodist Church. I sit in its elegant pews and listen to the organist and the robed choir perform staid hymns from the Methodist hymnal. But the congregation sings out in the old African polyrhythmic style of the sea islands, almost as though the hymns were ancient spirituals. The present organist accompanies the hymns in a jazz-influenced modern gospel style that dominates the singers and sometimes drowns them out. The result is exciting, but I miss the special kind of excitement of the old *a capella* shouting style for which Johns Island is famous.

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Star Hall to travel to other parts of the country to share their songs, in an effort to keep alive some of the older folk material. Each of these projects brought a complex mixture of success and problems and a renewed determination to keep trying.

For generations the Johns Island people were relatively isolated from mainstream America. The low, flat island, covered with tidal creeks and marshes, farmland, and forests of oaks draped with gray Spanish moss, was accessible only by boat until the early part of the century, when bridges and causeways connecting it with the mainland began to be built. Cut off from the mainland, these descendants of cotton plantation slaves retained many aspects of the old slave culture: a regional dialect, Gullah, still marked by distinctly African and Caribbean traits; a large body of folktales, cures, and supernatural beliefs; and a folk version of Christianity with a "shouting" style of singing old spirituals and hymns and a local "praise house" form of worship.

Old and new institutions existed side by side. For many people, Moving Star Hall—a tiny, battered clapboard building—had been the central meeting place for nearly fifty years. It housed a "tend-the-sick" and burial society, a secret lodge, and a community of worship. Here the members could express themselves freely and fully; in the Sunday night worship service each person took a turn preaching, testifying, praying, and raising a song.

Down the road a mile or so is Wesley Methodist Church, where a number of these same people attended regular Sunday services. Here the old folk ways were gradually being replaced by more formal modern practices. Wesley is a fine church with handsome pews, Methodist hymnals, a robed choir, and an organ. On the first Sunday of the month everyone listened to the Reverend C. C. Brown, who came from the mainland in the 1930s with a college degree, and sang hymns and spirituals led by the choir. But on the three Sundays a month when he preached in other churches, the congregation forgot about the organ and the hymnals and sang older spirituals, hymns, and shouts,

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796 accompanied only by foot and hand rhythms; the
533 service became much more spontaneous, like that in Moving Star Hall.

177 In the intervening years, this evolution to-
178 ward more modern forms has continued. Moving
796 Star Hall is no longer being used for the intimate
[344] and intense prayer meetings or for the all-night watch meetings attended primarily by the older people. These important gatherings now take place
• [794] in the larger churches. The Hall is currently home
[795] to a younger congregation, a Pentecostal church pastored by David Hunter, a member of one of the families very important to the original book. Here you find, along with more modern gospel songs and sermons, echoes of the old form of worship, but with the accompaniment of snare drum replacing the complex hand and foot rhythms of the shout. In the larger island churches, there is a vigorous contemporary religious culture with gospel choirs, wonderful organ accompaniment, and powerful preachers. But the older, more spontaneous forms of expression—raising a song by the spirit, taking it into a shout, testifying and preaching when moved by feelings—are not so easily integrated into the more formal structure of the service. There is a feeling from some of the younger people that it will be no great loss if this older level of expression dies out completely. One member of Wesley put it most succinctly when he explained, "There is a battle going on in the church now to get rid of all the old-style religion and singing. The battle is going on subconsciously. It's not going on knowingly because if it was put on the table, folk would take another look at it." It is our profound hope that people *will* take another look at it and make sure a place for the older expression remains. For this deepest layer of cultural tradition is marked by great complexity and beauty—the product of generations of community creativity.

178 In the 1960s the most unusual and modern in-
474 stitution on Johns Island was the Progressive Club, a successful consumers' cooperative owned and operated by some of the poorest people on the island.
[443] It contained a large grocery store and the only gym
529 on the island and served as a center for adult edu-
[872] (p. xii-B) cation and voter registration.
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Mrs. Isabel Simmons

ALL JOIN AND MAKE THAT HALL

The only time they miss me at that hall, I either sick or off on some church duty. That hall mean a whole lot to me. It give me strength, spirit to carry on. I know everybody who comes. Some is friends, cousins, sisters, some neighbors.

I remember when Moving Star Hall was built, 'round about 1913. 'Fa Father help build the hall. Mother too. We all throw money until we [illegible] enough to buy the land. All pay seven dollars for the lumber. All join and make that hall. They used to have prayer service in the house—only family then. Afterward, they began to have joint class from house to house. Then when we get the hall, we begin to have meeting there.

My daddy teach we how to sing, teach we how to shout, teach we how to go fast, teach we how to go slow. And then going to meeting, or later going to church, he'll teach we how to behave yourself when we get out to different place, before we leave home.

Used to be plenty people there—all them old people. They sing those old time spiritual, better than how we sing it now. Joe Bligen and Levy Green. Joe Deas was a good singer too, when he was much younger. Had plenty of singing womans, too.

That hall be full of people. Every Sunday. We have meeting in the neighborhood three time a week—Sunday and Tuesday and Thursday night. They keep a meeting going from eight until twelve. Then I get out, tomorrow morning I go on the farm make a day's work, too.

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Mr. Joe Deas

THE SICK BENEFIT, AND DEATH BENEFIT

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In the old days people couldn't afford insurance so we make up that Moving Star Society from ten cents each from Sunday School. We decided to bought a piece of ground to build that hall. And after we got 'em built we give 'em name: "Moving Star Hall." We got member from all different church. Generation after generation join and come out, join and come out. Some die and gone. The sick benefit. And death benefit. We still yet going on. By the help of the Lord we 'spect to go on 'til we are done.

Mrs. Alice Wine

THAT SOCIETY THERE, THEY TREAT YOU ALL RIGHT

Society is better than insurance to me. That society is supposed to tend the sick and bury the dead. Everybody who in there pay dues. They write from twenty-five cents up to one dollar a month. You is a twenty-five-cent member, you get twenty-five dollars when you die; you is a fifty-cent member, you get fifty dollars; you is a seventy-five-cent member, you get seventy-five dollars; you is a dollar member, you get a hundred dollars. Just as much as you pay, that's as much you get out. If you be sick, society service two person out to sit down with you all night, every night, until you get better or worse. If you don't go and sit, you be have to pay a dollar fine. If you sick and aren't able to pay your bills, they keep it up for you, live or dead; they elect money from the table and they keep you arrear. Insurance not going to do that.

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And then the insurance man going to give you your money—put it on the table. Now, how you going to bury? That money can't move to dig grave. But that society there, they treat you all right. They don't give you your money and leave you there. They give you your money and give you attention. And we got pallbearers and everything in there. We got the pallbearers to take you from the undertaker and bring you to the church; take you from the church and carry you in the graveyard. They put you down there, and we got the member to cover you up. See, that's done.

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Mr. John Smalls

EVERYBODY HAS A TURN

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In the meeting, Brother Joe Deas, he are the oldest person in there, we takes him for the leading man. We put him in the front to take the text. Then take myself, I follow. Then whosoever I wanted to assist—Eli Smith or any other leader. And we go on that way. Everybody has a turn.

We have prayer service the first Sunday night in the month; and the second Sunday night let the brothers preach; then the third Sunday night we let the sisters testify; then we go right back on the fourth Sunday night the brothers will preach again. We used to had it just how it come. We feel like prayer meeting tonight, we have that. But later days, we decided we would mark it out, that every person would know where he going.

That way we trying to do it now. Brother Deas takes the text, when is preaching night, and the boys supposed to preach from that text he give you. You can go preach anywhere you want to preach, but you come right back to that same text.

(533) Any individual, soon as the man finish preach, if you wanted to raise a song, you raise it. And another way, anytime we call someone up to preach, if anybody want to sing for you, can sing you up there. Then one can sing you down. Anybody. They can't sing long as you're talking; wait 'til you finish talk.

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Mr. John Smalls

TURN THESE BIG FISH LOOSE

Now friends, we still moving on.
I'm not going to linger with you
'Cause I want to turn these big fish loose.

Brother Deas will come and set the foundation,
The road we going to travel by,
That all of you could know the way to go.

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Mr. Joe Deas

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TONIGHT YOU GOT A BLESSED CHANCE

I thank you for this great privilege I have before you.
You know from last January '64, I didn't have to been here.
My face could have been under the clay.
But at this same particular hour I have a chance
To rub shoulder to shoulder with you,
I can speak language to language,
I can look face to face.
It is a great joy.

Now we started on a new task, started a new race.
From the twenty-fifth morning we been running,
We been wrastling to behold this very hour of the night.
How many haven't lived to been able to see the day?
Some gone by car,
Some pass away with fire,
Some gone by water.

All part of the world is stirred up now.
Tonight you got a blessed chance to go to the house of God.
Some want to come out tonight and can't come,
And some can come that wouldn't come.
But the day will come.
The day will come.

Mrs. Janie Hunter

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YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF

You can feel yourself in that hall. You have a chance to explain yourself —anybody who want to. But in church on Sunday, we just have one preacher talk. And you might get a chance to raise a song or pick out one person to make a few remarks. But to that hall, everybody could have they way, tell your own story. That's the difference it makes.

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Mr. John Smalls

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GOOD MORNING WARRIORS

Good morning Warriors!
How y'all feel?
I'm feeling special alive.

I just rise to tell you all my aim
And whole heart's desire.
My desire is to go the whole way.
I give thanks for being brought
Not from just last December
But from an infant birth.

I can say, "Are we yet alive
To see each other's face."
Thank God for His redeeming grace.

Since last January
Rocky was my road,
Tedious was my journey.
What troubles have I seen,
What conflicts have I passed.

If I had ten thousand tongues
It wouldn't be enough
To give thanks to Thee
Who took my feet out of the miry clay
And put them on a solid rock.

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Mr. Benjamin Bligen

A SERMON: LET NOT THEM THAT EAT DESPISE

I'm not gonna tarry before you, Warriors. I'm glad to be here to mingle my voice among my sisters and brothers. I hope and trust that if this sermon don't do you any good, I hope it won't do you no harm.

You know you can go from one part of the Bible to the other. God say we should love one another. Let not them that eat despise them that eat not. Let us remember one another. Don't let us be like Dives now. Let us try to be just as Lazarus. Dives despised the poor. Lazarus went and ask just for a crumb that fall from the table, and before Dives had the passion on him to give, he call the dog on him. But the poor beast have compassion and lick Lazarus.

Time going pass and go on. Time come along when the poor man die. He went on home to God and been at rest. Rich man Dives die, and his home was in Hell. When he lift up his eye in Hell and saw Lazarus in Heaven, he began to memorize. He know he didn't do right, but he cries, "Oh Father, let Lazarus come and dip his finger in the water and cool my trials and trouble."

God says, "No. You had all the good times, plenty of money. You didn't need Lazarus at that time. You need him now, but it too late."

Dives say, "I got five brother. Just give me a chance that I may go back and tell them to get their heart right, that they may shun this torment place I'm in."

And He say, "No. I got Moses and I got the prophets; let them hear what they say. If they don't believe the prophets, they won't believe you, Dives."

Pray for me, Warriors. Let us sing like we singing for the last time. Let us pray like we are praying for the last time. Take no thought for tomorrow, for tomorrow the sun may shine on your grave. Jesus told us to dig deep and lay your foundation on a solid rock, that when the storm of life blow against you, you're gonna find your Father rock. If you dwell upon Him, everythin' will be all right. The world can't do you no harm.

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Mrs. Janie Hunter and the Moving Star Hall congregation

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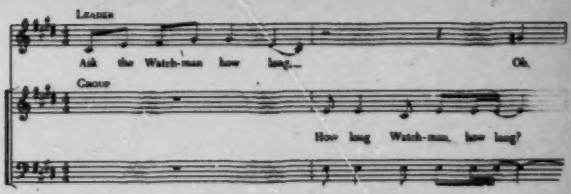
ASK THE WATCHMAN HOW LONG

Leader: Oh ask my brother how long,
Group: How long Watchman, how long?

In sixty-four how long? . . . etc.
Well, ask my daughter how long . . . etc.
Well, ask my preacher how long . . . etc.

Oh all my neighbors, how long? . . . etc.

Oh before the roll call . . . etc.
Oh just a few more risings . . . etc.
Oh ask my leader how long . . . etc.

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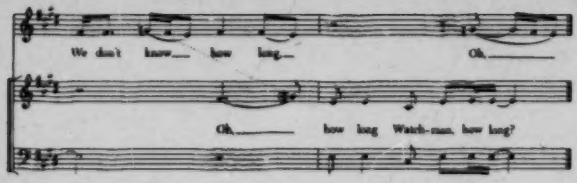
Well, all my neighbors how long? . . . etc.

Oh soon it will be over . . . etc.
Watchman, how long? . . . etc.
You know how long, how long . . . etc.
Ask my friends how long . . . etc.

Brother Jenkins, how long? . . . etc.

Oh, how long, how long,
How long Watchman, how long?
How long, how long,
How long Watchman, how long?

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Rev. James Drum

GET ON YOUR HOLY HORSE

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Be careful, my friends, because sometimes the
Chairman of Hell begin to saddle up his pony.
He gonna override somebody.
You walk down the road
And somehow your feet begin to be tangled.
The road become rocky, hard to cross.

Hallelujah, my friends,
Put on your travelin' shoes.
Get on your holy horse
Because sin are now pressing hard,
Many dangers follow.

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Mr. Benjamin Bligen

I REALIZE I'M HERE FOR SOME PURPOSE

159 794 I was about twenty-seven when I start to go to Moving Star Hall regular. Since I was a little boy, Mom used to take me there on her back—I was so small to walk in the dark, you know.

159 794 523 869 There was a time when blues was all that was on my mind. But the truth is the light, and after getting old in age I realize that I'm here for some purpose. Father always teach me the Bible, teach us how to sing and how to pray, and tell us what must not do and what must do to inherit life everlasting. So I stop and ask myself some question. Then I just had to change from singing blues and begin to go back to what my old parents said—singing spiritual songs.

And I found out that's better.

Mr. William Saunders

THIS IS GOOD, BUT IT DOESN'T HELP YOUR EATING

159 794 796 786 878 We all as kids went to Moving Star Hall. As far as I was concerned, I just had to be there. We used to enjoy the singing and the shouting. And at a certain period of the night, all the youngsters in there had to go up front and kneel down and everybody prayed. That place used to be full—three nights a week. You couldn't get in that place if you be late on Sunday nights. And it was so much young people. All of a sudden it just start dying off.

159 794 138 884 794 796 For one thing most of the young people started going away. Like me, I went in the Army. I was about fifteen. Once the kids start going to different places, and we start to be more enlightened, then we start getting away from this old type of thing. As we get more education, we come to find out that this wasn't the type of thing we needed to help us through the world. We needed more than this. This is good, but it doesn't help your eating. Why waste time with something that you aren't gonna get anything out of at all? You gonna be looking forward to when you die, and man, you hungry now.

That Moving Star Hall business just about died out completely. Then they started building it back up again. Now some of the people, the Moving Star Hall Singers, are enjoying some of the fruit of their labor.

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Mr. Abraham Jenkins

I'LL GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF PEOPLE WHO REALLY MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THESE ISLANDS

554 Sometimes people don't recognize the hard work of people behind the scenes. I'll give you an example of people who really made a difference in these islands. Mrs. Alleen Brewer Wood came to Johns Island in 1929. Her husband, Rev. Brewer, was the pastor of two churches on the island. She was quite a community person. She would help with anything that needed doing. [757] These were the days when people depended on root medicine and midwifery, what I call indirect health care. It was not the approved method of health care, but people had their own methods for taking care of problems. Mrs. Wood was around in that time when we were trying to get people to feel better about themselves, and trying to teach them about self-respect. She was one of the persons that we call the "grandmoms of the islands," instrumental in so many little things that you don't hear that much about. She helped lay down some of the foundation for the projects that came to Johns Island. Later on she taught the Citizenship School classes on Edisto.

554 793 Rev. McKinley Washington was one of those people that my daddy really relied on. He would call him up every Sunday morning before church and talk over with him the things he would like to see discussed in church—voter registration or whatever the issue was. He was just a young minister in those days, right out of school. He started the NAACP here. And later they formed [668] a group from the Presbyterian church called the Self-Development of People [794] to deal with the needs of people on Edisto. They bought an old school building (used to be the school for the white kids) and used it as a community building.

When Esau was working through the Charleston Citizens' Committee, which took in all of the sea islands, Rev. Washington was his connection for Edisto and Yonges islands. People were always reluctant about how fast to [178] move to bring about change. They will go with you for awhile, but then if it looks like you're not giving up, some will want to put the brakes on. So Esau had to have people that would keep that motivation going. And McKinley was one of those people. He's a real good speaker. His voice is deep and heavy, and when he starts preaching, you have to listen to him. So my daddy used him as an inspirator.

When Rev. Willis Goodwin came to Johns Island to pastor in 1966, people just looked on the ministry as church on Sunday. When Rev. Goodwin got here he changed all that. His ministry was seven days per week. He would go around to the people who were sick or were in need—and everybody was in

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Mrs. Ruth Bligen

I LIKE TO BE ME. I DON'T LIKE TO PRETEND

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At first I thought people won't want to hear this kind of song. But after I went to Atlanta, Georgia, I was very pleased. I was happy. Everybody was so nice. And I enjoyed myself. That's the first time I ever leave Johns Island to go sing.

Going off, it made me learn a lot. You see a lot of people. You enjoy yourself. People treat you so nice. They really make me feel like I'm something special. That time we went to Seabrook, my picture was in the paper. The lady I work for daughter, she get the picture. She call and say, "Tootsie, you're a celebrity. Your picture's in the paper."

You know, I like to be me. I don't like to pretend. If I go off, I'm not going to pretend that I'm somebody else. I'm going to be me! My children and grandchildren are happy. They're happy to know that their grandmommy go off and sing and picture been in the paper. So I'm happy, too. I didn't realize days past and gone that things was going to work out like that.

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The best trip I had was when a busload went to Washington from Wesley Church. Rev. Goodwin went and everyone was like one big family. The bus driver took us around and showed us different places. We had a good time. On Sunday morning, we did a church service at the festival.

I really wish we could get some more programs off from here. That's something I been looking forward to. If just once a year, you just get away on some kind of program. I like to see friends I've made in different places. And when I go, I don't want to rush off. After we sing, I want to sit around and listen to other people sing.

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Mrs. Ruth Bligen

I LIKE TO BE ALONG WITH THE OLD PEOPLE

533 794 In church we have a lot of different choirs. But if you want to raise a song, you do that. Sometimes I'll sing. Sometimes Benji will sing. We have a good time. Our pastor is very nice. He likes singing, too. He likes singing and shouting. On Thursday nights, we have prayer meeting at the church. You express yourself and pray. It's like in the hall. The young children are not going to carry on like the old people. But I like the old people. I like to be along with the old people. And we had some wonderful times in Moving Star. I don't think the old songs will die out. We still sing it. I love the old songs.

Mr. William Saunders

IT'S THE PLACE WHERE PEOPLE SINK OR SWIM

791 794

I feel I am more fortunate than most of the people who are fighting in the arena I'm fighting in because I have a way to recharge my batteries. The religious aspect of my life is pretty real to me. It gives me a lot of strength. Wesley has been my power base. It has made me feel capable of doing anything.

794 533 796 It's real to me. The singing of a person like Ruth Bligen. To hear her some Sunday morning. Her voice is purer now than it's ever been. She just gets to the place that she passes out. Just knowing what she's been through, when she sings it's not a performance. You can see Benji on a Sunday morning. He's so articulate and his Gullah becomes more profound than most people because he says it so distinctly. But to see him pray and he gets to a point where he's got to stop, and somebody's got to go and take him down because of his problems.

791 794 178 It's the place where people sink or swim. And it's the only thing they have to turn to. And yet they're always walking with their heads held high. And that's a strength that the people had on the island that I believe is dying. That strength and the proudness is not there anymore like it used to be. Sometimes you skip a generation, for whatever reason. So maybe the cycle will come back again.

But it's a base for me. It's my power source. I come back to the city, where I can go for another six days with all of the adversities that face me.

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491 one-lane affairs, which pass through woods of oak and pine
and marshes filled with cat tails. The church itself is an
346 impressive structure, built by the cooperative labor of the
461 men many years ago, each of whom hauled an allotment of con-
476 crete blocks from the boat landing in ox carts over the
493 deeply rutted sand roads. It was built in a location equally
368 distant from the "four corners" which were populated at that
time, and faces due east. Preceding the major morning ser-
794 mon, three Sunday-school classes are held simultaneously in
the church sanctuary, with oral reading and discussion of a
printed lesson a major component of the lessons for all age
796 groups. Formal preaching is held one Sunday each month, with
793 morning and evening services conducted by a well-educated
794 minister who comes from Georgetown. On other Sundays, ser-
vices are conducted by church members. The most prestigious
794 social group on the island is that of the Board of Deacons
571 of the church; this small group of six or seven of the oldest
men conducts the major business of the island. Other busi-
595 ness is conducted by two women's clubs or "lodges," which
often meet on Sunday afternoons in the abandoned schoolhouse.
Other social activities are parties, adult education classes,
music and dancing, and story telling. Community parties
527 are sometimes held in the old school building, and adult
893 education classes have been conducted there as well. Music
533 is a highly valued activity in every age group, as evidenced
535 both by the singing for Sunday services and by the dancing

000 -13% of its residents.

SEA ISLAND RELIGION

795 The most dominant institution in Sea Island society is
794 the church. There are numerous churches on each island. These churches are Protestant in denomination and are about equally divided among Methodist and Baptist congregations. These congregations may have as few as forty or as many as two hundred members. Each congregation supports the operational expenses and contributes to the maintenance of the church facility. Ordinarily this facility is a large one room, single floor, cinder block building. The size and renovation are generally determined by the financial resources of the congregation. In some cases, along with renovation the church has been enlarged by one or two rooms.

794 Until the late 1950's each congregation tried with all
796 effort to have its own Pastor, but this became increasingly difficult, so today, even the larger membered congregations have reduced their Sunday services to a bi-monthly schedule. The Sunday gathering is really the time of the community's elders. The entire day revolves around church attendance and relaxing in the Spirit of the Lord. Sunday services generally start for the congregation at 11:00 A.M. and concludes near 2:30 P.M. Afterwards there may be elder meetings or evening prayer attended primarily by the senior
796 congregation members. The nature of the Sea Island religions

796 services as depicted in the literature is still rather accurate and need not be entertained here, except to say that the general patternings of the services and demonstrations of faith via "shouting" has remained as a center of church services.

The Church Structure

794 (793) The Pastor is the head of each church. There may or may not be a pastor "in training" to assist as needed. Under the Pastor is the Elder Council of Deacons. This body is comprised of the oldest male members of the congregations. The Deacons Council, through a committee structure, runs the affairs of the church. Next in the structure are the Elder Mothers, followed by the general congregations. Aside from their committee responsibilities, the Elder Deacons take part in Sunday services. An extremely learned body, the Elders are easily as able in the scriptures as the Pastors. Their learned abilities and oratorical skills are particularly evident during Funeral services. In these services, the Deacons take turns recalling through their eyes the life of the deceased person. Their eulogies delivered by these Soul stirring orators are the highlighted feature of the rites.

The Practice of the Sea Island Religion

771 554 The islander does not simply outgrow religion. On the

771 [554 islands a man's worth is measured by his religious dedication. This is so much the case, that the question of outgroving religion, or active versus the inactive participation of the congregation is not a legitimate concern. The practice of weekday religion is more vigorous than the Sunday demonstrations of faith.

Here on the Islands, religion penetrates every aspect of life. It is rare to encounter islanders who are not learned in the scriptures. This includes islanders who because of personal conflicts with the church's institutionalized style, no longer attend Sunday services. The blunt of this disagreement is usually focused at the church's social inactivity; they say the church simply is not doing enough.

771 795

The Church's Doings

795 794 Before the coming of community action programs, helping neighbors in need was the exclusive role of the church. To some extent, the church is still the most active agent in this regard. Whose analysis shows that congregation members make up the policy making bodies of all the community action programs on the island. It appears, now that these program resources are available, the church has taken a more indirect role. Rather than continuing the tradition of neighbor helping neighbor, neighbors in need are now directed to available program resources. When the need is

795 outside the realm of the existing programs, the older tradi-
794 tional methods of helping are reenacted.

794 The Young Islander and the Church
883
795

> Gone ta ole timb religion, gone to ole timb religion, gone ta ole timb religion. It be good enoub for ma mama, it be good enoub for ma papa, it be good enoub for me. It be good enoub for me.

This ole song of religion dedication still has meaning and is still the path taken by younger islanders. But the path these days is not taken without hesitation. Younger islanders spend a great deal of time in discussion of the worths and limitations of the church. The focus of much of this discussion is on the dominance of Elders. The younger islanders feel that the Elders are maintaining the church in the ole manner which excludes their influence. Elders in [791] turn suggest that the practice of religion is a long time faith, that the young ones are recent to their belief and have not paid the religious dues which warrants keeping company (having input into the church) with the ole time practitioners. In spite of the disagreements the young continue to participate in the church.

SEA ISLAND MAGIC MEDICINE:
A CONSEQUENCE OF NECESSITY

758 Sea Islanders have never had ready access to medical
759 personnel. There are only two doctors on the islands. Both the doctors and a new health clinic system are recent to the

6: Smith I,Y-5 (no date) 1989
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434 an unemployment rate of 3.1%, which compares to a 3.7% ratio
592 for male workers. Females were the heads of 836 of the
464 families with poverty level incomes.

434 On a county basis, the median annual income of Black workers was $4,635. Black female head of households earned a median income of $3,162. Six thousand nine hundred and forty-one or some 44.6% of the 15,576 Black families in the county had incomes below the poverty line. The median income of families below the poverty line was $2,193. Fifteen per cent of the total number of families were receiving public assistance.

The 1960 census reported 10% of the Sea Island families with incomes under $1,000; 65% of this work force earned
464 less than $2,000. This United Methodist Church survey re-
794 ports a 15% unemployment rate across the islands. Employment in "the area is of a seasonal nature and most people are out of active employment for a large part of the year."[2]

464 The discrepancies between these figures are apparent.
794 First hand exposure to the islands would suggest the accu-
114 racy of the latter figures. However, the methodological limitations of the church survey effort makes the reported estimates suspect. For example, the researchers were on the islands only one week, during which time they concentrated

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[2]Colin Moore and Robert Washington, A Profile of Rural Poverty, A Report on Economic Conditions in the Sea Islands of South Carolina, August, 1970.

6: Smith I,Y-5 (no date) 1989
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their time and energy in interviewing the leadership personnel of each island, and consequently relied quite heavily on the estimations they provided. The error possibilities which accompany this procedure as the basis for later projection statements are well noted.

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HOUSING ON THE SEA ISLANDS

There are 11,557 housing units on the five Sea Islands. The median number of persons per unit is 4.01; 3,743 of these units are occupied by Black families. The median number of persons per Black occupied unit is 4.65.

The by island breakdown shows a total of 6,642 units on James Island. One thousand one hundred and twenty-eight of the total are units occupied by Black families. There are 4.63 Blacks and 3.64 Whites per units.

Johns Island has a total of 1,875 units, with 4.01 persons per unit. Blacks occupy 678 of these units and there are 4.58 Blacks per unit.

Wadmalaw Island has 477 units and 4.24 persons per unit. Three hundred and seventy-two of these units are Black occupied, with 4.62 persons per unit.

Yonges Island has 2,224 units and 4.15 persons per unit. Blacks occupy 1,326 of these units; there are 4.78 Blacks per unit.

There are 329 units on Edisto Island, and 4.18 persons per unit. The persons per unit average for Black household

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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other denominations, I make no attempt to go into a description of usual church observances. My particular concern has been the preservation of the religious slave songs. Those of the Baptist Negroes—the most conservative sect on the Coast of Georgia—give greater evidence than the others of an African background. Coupled as they are with the most picturesque customs, they have come in for special consideration.

Although certain songs are peculiarly appropriate to such occasions as Easter and Communion, they cannot be rigidly classified according to the services which may have inspired them.[1] They were sung at any time, anywhere. The majority of them appear equally suited to church, prayer, and covenant meeting. However, the ceremonies connected with baptism, "settin'-up" with the dead, and burial mean so much to the Negro that a separate section of this Chapter is devoted to each of them. They appear to be connected with customs prevailing a century ago in the section of Africa from which the slaves were obtained. The significance attached to baptism in a river, or immersion on the outgoing tide, may tie up with the initiation rites connected with the river-worship of Dahomey; and anyone who reads what explorers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have to say about the Africans' concern with death will recognize that our Negroes display the same trait.

CHURCH, PRAYER, AND COVENANT MEETING

Patty Gardner[2] used to open the "South End" prayer meeting, held at Deacon Merchant's house, by singing the following song. As the other members joined in, they shook hands ceremoniously with their neighbors assembled in a circle.[3] The younger generation knew nothing of this custom until I had Old Quarterman come to the Cabin and "show them the way."

[1] Some may have come into existence while the slaves were at work—others were undoubtedly conceived under stress of religious emotion. In the old days a deacon, at the peak of his rhythmically chanted prayer, broke into song, in which those present joined. After a verse or two, he continued the prayer, ending his plea for mercy by singing with the others some appropriate slave hymn. It is unfortunate that this highly effective method of rousing the congregation should have lapsed in most churches. Now, the impassioned exhortation ends with a sudden drop into an ordinary conversational tone—like a dash of cold water in the face.

[2] Patty, while singing a religious song at work, would go into a trance-like state. Clarence told me he remembered seeing her moving rhythmically in a circle around her cabin, a dish towel in one hand and a discarded tin can (highly prized in those days) in the other. She dried the can over and over, totally oblivious of time or surroundings.

[3] This procedure is mentioned by Sir Charles Lyell in his Second Visit to the United States.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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533 796 At one of our singing festivals, Liverpool, who was well over a hundred at the time, became excited as he heard again the old prayer-meeting song, left his seat, joined in the swaying group of sixty-five singers, and gave a demonstration of the "right hand of fellowship" which he performed with the dignity seen in the minuet. First he gave his right hand to the singer on his right; then, bowing sedately, he crossed his left hand over to the same member. Both hands were then shaken as the singers bowed with the rhythm before passing to the next neighbor and repeating the same ceremony.

(539)

'Tis well an' good I come here tonight
come here tonight
come here tonight
Well an' good I come here tonight
For to do my Master's will.
O Brother Quarterman show me the way
show me the way
show me the way
O my brother show me the way—
The way to the Promised Land.

• (544) At old-time prayer meetings the following song brought out all of the members—one at a time—on the floor, breaking up any tendency to stiffness. Each rose as his or her name was called and moved around the circle, returning to the group when another member's name was about to be called.

This same song was called an "ant'em" on Eleuthera, (one of the Bahamas). When I asked the singer if it was old, she said: "Methuselum sung 'um."

533 539

Oh mh Jesus bin yer
O He bin yer
Jesus bless my soul an' gone.
Jesus bin yer
O He bin yer
Jesus bless my soul an' gone.
Sister Bessie where were you
My sister where were you
My sister where were you
When the Lord was passin' by.

(Illustration 16) A

A, [For Illustration 16, see Category 142, plate facing p. 97--Analyst]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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St. Simon's Island

"Covenant meetin'," now called "Pure Mind Meetin'," was formerly held at the last prayer meeting before Communion Sunday, and was of service in keeping track of the members and making sure, from their own words, that they were "livin' in union." No more meetings of this character have been held at the "South End" of St. Simon's since Betty Brown paid the penalty of false testimony. She got up and told the members: "I'm at peace with everybody." Then, as she was leaving the church, she said: "I'm goin' home t' put Josie [her crippled grandson] out the house." She walked to the step, fell, and never reached home alive.

BELIEVER I KNOW

This song, sung on Sapelo by Katie Brown, while sitting under her tall magnolia tree, reflects the peace of her surroundings. Although she was born about 1850, her voice is remarkably true and sweet. She tells me that the record book of the Spalding Plantation has her age as ten years when the War Between the States began, but she believes she was two years older, for she wore a shift [4] at the time her family left Sapelo and "went to the Main" for refuge on the Stephens Plantation in Bryan County. In December, after the "Big War" was over, they walked to Savannah. There Katie's mother, Cotty Grovenor, petitioned the Freedman's Bureau to let her return to Sapelo. "March was comin' and time to plant." She remembers distinctly how sore and swollen her feet were from walking. Cotty had to soak them in warm water each night.

I know, I know Lord
Believer I know
I know, I know Lord
Believer I know
I know the road so thorny
Believer I know
I know the road is thorny
Believer I know

[4] The slaves count their age by some such event. Katie seemed to be proud of the fact she was old enough to wear a shift. Shad Hall must be younger, for he still wore a "binyan" (apparently an African word), which was the kind of shirt worn by young boys before they wore pants. With a grin, he told me their first pants had no pockets so that it would be less easy for them to steal eggs.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

BAPTISM

795 533 On a frosty Sunday morning many years ago, I happened to be on the bank of the Frederica River south of the Fort. From a distance I heard the Negroes singing what sounded like a dirge, but as they came closer I found it was a baptismal song, sung by the procession which had formed, as is customary, at the church a mile away.[12] It was headed by the minister, followed by his assistants, the deacons and other members in pairs, while the "candidates" brought up the rear. The girls were dressed in white, but the boys wore ordinary overalls and work shirts. The solemn dignity of the occasion was impressive. Joe Lowman, one of the assisting preachers, with great earnestness addressed the congregation. He exhorted those of his hearers who had not been baptized to take no chances. In an intimate conversational tone he gave his views on the subject. He wanted it clearly understood that he was not prepared to say, "nobody was going to be saved who had only had his head sprinkled"—but he, for one, was not for disobeying instructions. The Lord ordered us to go down into the water, and that was all there was about it. It was like sending a boy to the store for potatoes; if he brought home turnips it would not be the same thing at all.

795 •794 [793]

[782] After the discourse and the usual prayers,[13] which were punctuated in the African manner with encouraging responses, rhythmically delivered, the officiating minister went down into the river to the spot selected by the deacon, who, with his staff to show the depth, had preceded him. While those on the river bank sang

[794] [577] [12] Before leaving the church the minister calls his congregation to order, and gives them some last-minute instructions. One cautioned his flock to conduct themselves on the way to the water in an orderly manner befitting the solemnity of the occasion. He said: "Now, I don't want any talkin' or laughin'.—Don' y'u begin to tell about your bean patch an' your peas. This ain' no time for it."

[114] [196] [13] In a recent book the assertion is made that our Negroes "pray to the river" when they are baptized. This sounds like an African survival until it is learned that "to" means "beside" in this instance. It is no wonder that those who are unfamiliar with our Negroes and their use of words make curious mistakes.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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"Wade in the Water," the candidates, each escorted by a church member, followed to the water's edge. There the girls' skirts were tied above their knees to prevent undignified billowing, and the assisting deacon led each candidate to the spot where the minister stood in about two-and-a-half feet of water.

The Negroes probably follow the usual procedure of white Baptists; however, I find that no two preachers use precisely the same words, though the substance is always the same: "In obedience to the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ I baptize thee"—and at this point the immersion takes place—"in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen"—and up comes the sputtering, shivering candidate. When the procession returns to the church, the ones who have just been baptized line up and receive the "right hand of fellowship" from the minister and the church members—and not until then may they consider themselves as safely within the fold.

Although the water was bitterly cold that February morning, the young people behaved very well, and only one squealed a little—which was considered very bad form. If you do not come up like a lamb it is "suspicioned" that your conversion has not been authentic, and the baptism may need to be performed again.

In the old days, when the Negroes were closer to Africa, baptisms in the tidewater section took place punctiliously, no matter how inconvenient the hour, on the outgoing tide.[14] In the interior, of course, where rivers and streams can be depended upon to carry the candidate's sins away from him, a baptism can be safely set for any appointed hour. Now, cement tanks are built in the yards of conventional churches, and another picturesque custom will soon be a thing of the past. Many a time have I gone to the South End or to Frederica, before sunrise, in the hope of learning something new. Something new was not always forthcoming, but the picture in the low morning light was worth going miles to see.

[14] *The stress laid by Negro Baptists upon baptism being performed on the outgoing tide lends support to the theory, held by Melville Herskovits, that the strong adherence to the ritual of baptism among Negro Christians is related to "the great importance of the river-cult in Africa, particularly in view of the fact that, as has often been observed, river-cult priests were sold into slavery in great numbers."* (Handbook of Social Psychology.)

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
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doubtless speaking from a knowledge only of the plantation where she was then residing, for her co-workers have left descriptions of various praise houses on the Island. W. C. Gannett wrote in April, 1862, that the praise house on Pine Grove plantation was "quite a nice little house,—the best on this part of the island."[81] The praise house of Eustis plantation on Ladies Island which their mistress, then living in Massachusetts, had built them was a church indeed.[82]

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Once, twice, or even three times a week, those who were religiously inclined met at the praise house to sing, pray, and exhort. Edward L. Pierce estimated that about half of the adult Negroes on St. Helena were members of a church.[83] The praise meeting usually opened with a "sperichil" followed by a hymn which the leader "deaconed out" two lines at a time, reading from a well-worn psalm book, if perchance he had learned to read, pretending to read, nevertheless, holding the book nearer the flickering light as if to make out the words, all the while calling out the lines from memory. Cuffy, the leader of the praise house on Pine Grove plantation, always made his own hymns, improvised from hymns of the whites, "praying to de Lord Jedus teach um as he in de woods [to] jine one word 'ginst t'oder."[84] After another hymn and perhaps a spiritual, the leader would ask for a prayer, then

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[81] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 20 n.

[82] See also Wm. Henry Trescot, "Address on Gen. Stephen Elliott, delivered in the House of Representatives of South Carolina, Sept. 8, 1866," p. 5. For many years preceding the War, Rev. Stephen Elliott, father of General Elliott, of Beaufort, "had declined the rectorship of a regular congregation, and, having built a church upon his own plantation, preached regularly and most efficiently to the slaves of the neighborhood."

[83] Pierce, "Report," *Rebellion Record*, sup., I., 305.

[84] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 27.

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read a long passage from the Bible and after another prayer call upon a member to speak.

Edward L. Pierce attended several praise meetings on St. Helena in 1862 and reported that "their exhortations to personal piety were fervent, and though their language was many times confused, at least to my ear, occasionally an important instruction or a felicitous expression could be recognized. In one case, a preacher of their own, commenting on the text, 'Blessed are the meek,' exhorted his brethren not to be 'stout-minded.' "[55]

After another prayer and song the "shout" began.[56] Although the prayer meeting invariably preceded the shout, the members considered the shout a part of their worship, explaining that "it exercise de frame."[57] Pushing the benches back to the wall and perhaps putting another piece of lightwood on the fire in the hearth and on the one which burned red before the door, the worshipers began the recreation which for the church members took the place of the informal dance.

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"Old and young, men and women, sprucely-dressed young men, grotesquely half-clad field hands—the women generally with gay handkerchiefs twisted about their heads and with short skirts—boys with tattered shirts and men's trousers, young girls barefooted," wrote Miss Harriet Ware who attended many a shout on St. Helena in the

[55] Pierce, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

[56] Mr. William Elliott, of Columbia, S. C., a relative of the William Elliott frequently quoted in these pages, states that "the 'shout' is the object of the meeting to which the rest is the introduction." Mr. Elliott speaks from an intimate knowledge of sea-island customs. The shouts, however, which the writer attended on St. Helena Island in 1928 were invariably commenced after the praise meeting had been dismissed.

[57] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 27.

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ship was worthy of admittance. The Reverend Charles C. Jones, after many years spent in preaching to sea-island and mainland slaves concluded that they were inclined to place true religion in profession, in forms and ordinances, and in excited states of feeling, and true conversion in dreams, visions, trances, and voices, "all bearing a perfect or striking resemblance to some form or type which has been handed down for generations, or which has been originated in the wild fancy of some religious teacher among them."[62] They offered these dreams and visions to the church sessions as evidences of conversion just as the whites were inclined to do in camp meetings.

They were also quick to follow the custom of the whites in "churching" offending members. "The discipline of colored members," wrote the Reverend Mr. Jones, who, no doubt, had taken part on many such occasions, "is involved, tedious, vexatious and disgusting." Excommunications and suspensions were of "perpetual occurrence, for crimes shocking in character, and of themselves sufficient to show the general state of morals; such for example as adultery, fornication, theft, lying, drunkenness, quarreling, and fighting." The Reverend Mr. Jones thought that the Negroes perverted the gospel and colored their religious practices with their African superstitions. Thus their "doctors, prophets, and conjurers" modified the teachings of the white preachers.[63]

The church was not only responsible for giving Christianity to the Negroes, but also to a large extent for teaching a few of them to read and write. The early statutes

[62] Jones, *Religious Instruction of the Negroes*, pp. 125, 126.
[63] *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 127, 128.

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against teaching slaves to read had long been in abeyance when Sunday schools began to be organized among them early in the ante-bellum period. Masters usually encouraged their people to attend these Sabbath schools and often delegated their own children to do the teaching. The reaction against the Abolition agitation led many planters to fear the consequence of their people's learning to read. Accordingly, the Sunday school movement was largely abandoned after 1835; nevertheless, on every plantation there were always some slaves who either were taught to read with the permission of the master or who picked up the knowledge clandestinely. Miss Towne found on St. Helena Island in 1862 a cabinet maker, Will Capers, who could read and write and who hoped the Government would pay him for teaching his fellows. He told her that he conducted a secret night school for men during plantation days.[84] Nevertheless, it was unusual for a slave to know his letters, and most of them could not count beyond, "one, two, five, eight, ten."[85]

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For the most part, sea-island planters found their laborers mild and forgiving, quick to start a quarrel, but as quick to forget it. Sir Charles Lyell thought that there were more broken heads among the Irish in a few years when they came to dig the Brunswick Canal than had been known among the coastal Negroes for half a century.[86] They were a good natured, happy people, making the most of their lot, forgetting the work of the day in their hours of "pleasuring."

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[84] *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne*, p. 27.

[85] Towne, "Pioneer Work on the Sea Islands," *Southern Workman*, July, 1901. Miss Towne, however, could not have come in contact with the house servants, but only with the field hands.

[86] Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, I, 266.

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248 175 (657) men, for the young men were still away in the army or at work in the camps for "cash money." Across the road the cotton was scarcely up, struggling bravely against wild phlox and grass, a picturesque battle bearing witness that the owner would beg for Government rations in the winter and perhaps stand by and see his land sold for taxes a few years later.

• 794 175 The freedmen, some of them now making their second crop on their own little "plantations," were on their way to "Brick Church" to hear "old Massa Richard,"[1] who had preached to them before "big gun shoot," speak in the open under the moss-hung live oaks. They crowded (492) (493) the road, a gaily-dressed throng of black folk, some on foot, some on horseback, some in wagons, others in the rude ox cart of plantation days, some even in northern trotting buggies drawn by Government-condemned horses which the proud owners had bought for perhaps as much as $300 cash. They were a colorful sight in their gaudy (292) calicoes and crinolines. The younger women wore straw bonnets, stays, and cotton gloves, but the grannies clung to their many-colored handkerchiefs and their loose gowns cut after the fashion of slavery days.

Loud laughter and gay chatter rang out as they passed through the gates which in plantation days had made a private road to the church. As a buggy containing a group of white teachers and superintendents approached, those on foot stopped and drew aside, out of respect, to let the vehicle pass. The old women gave the white party a droll bob of the head, the young ones made

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[1] The Reverend Richard Fuller, former pastor of "Brick Church" and owner of a plantation on St. Helena Island.

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curtseys, and the men touched their hats in a soldier's salute, or swept them quickly from their heads.

The Reverend Richard Fuller created a sensation when he arrived. Stares brightened and eyes grew moist. Amid shouts of "Bress de Lo'd, Bres de Lo'd!" "Hebenly Massa!" "Gra-a-ate King!" he mounted to the platform. When all were seated a quaint old man, clad in cotton checks, bowed from many years of cotton hoeing, stepped out on the platform and, leaning on his cane, gently swaying his body as if to keep time, struck up in a shrill, cracked voice the tune:

"Ma-a-assa Fullah a sittin' on de tree ob life
For to yeddy when Jordan roll,
Roll, Jordan; roll, Jordan,
Roll, Jordan, roll."

And then a plain, middle-aged black preacher came forward and commenced a prayer, which he pursued at great length with frequent interruptions from the congregation of "Amen," "Glory," and "Lo'd, do!" They had already been to their praise-house meetings twice during the week and some of them earlier that morning, but they were none the less eager for this Sunday-noon meeting when fellow freedmen from all over the Island gathered for worship and recreation.[2]

A few former planters, like the Reverend Richard Fuller, had returned to Beaufort to try to take up life again in the little town now overrun with freedmen, Fed-

[2] The foregoing description is based on Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*; "The South As It Is," *Nation*, Dec. 1865, pp. 746-747; J. W. Alvord, *Letters from the South*, pp. 8-10; Charles Nordoff, *The Freedmen of South Carolina*; S. G. W. Benjamin, "The Sea Islands," *Harper's Monthly*, LVII, 839-861.

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had gone away with her and "married." She had begged him to return and so he did, but after a few months he had gone off again to live with the other wife down the road a few tasks away. He was in the meeting-house yonder, a prayin' now.[24]

After Reconstruction, one heard fewer of such stories on St. Helena, for the church officials attempted to discipline all offenders. Although there were fewer cases of desertion, illegitimacy was none the less frequent despite the "churching." The significant change in family life was the elevated status of the husband. In attempting to stabilize family life, the superintendents and teachers had appealed to the man as the head of the family and had urged him to assume his rightful responsibilities. Black men who had been accustomed to the dominance of women during slavery came now to warn their wives to keep their places. The land which they bought from the Government was in their own names and they came to look upon the house as theirs, not that of their wives as in slavery days.

Freedom brought few changes in the religious life of the people. They still clung to their plantation praise houses, but instead of one praise house to a plantation they occasionally had as many as two or three. Besides this they built a few new churches, for "Brick Church" was too near Ladies Island to be within convenient reach of all the Islanders. But their church forms they changed very little except to make the praise house leaders subject to the Negro preachers of their churches whereas during antebellum days they had been subject to the white ministers.

[24] See Reid, *After the War*, p. 106n.